DR. MABUSE

NORBERT JACQUES

DR. MABUSE

MASTER OF MYSTERY

A NOVEL

BY

NORBERT JACQUES

AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION
BY
LILIAN A. CLARE

833.91
J19dEc

FRAGILE: HANDLE WITH CARE

The deteriorated condition of this brittle book makes further repair impossible. Return to Circulation enclosed in its accompanying phase box.

Your thoughtfulness is appreciated.

TD.
.C. 1.

Southern Illinois
University Libraries
Carbondale

First published in 1923

(*All rights reserved*)

Printed in Great Britain by
UNWIN BROTHERS, LIMITED, THE GRESHAM PRESS, LONDON AND WOKING

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Since there is no actual equivalent of the position of "Staatsanwalt" it is almost impossible to find an English rendering that conveys its full meaning. In part the duties assimilate those of the Public Prosecutor, but in England we can hardly conceive of an official of high judicial status personally identifying himself with his cases to the extent of disguising himself and playing the part of a detective. Wenk's position appears to combine some of the offices which would here be delegated to various individuals acting more or less independently as subordinates to a higher and single authority. He was a barrister and an LL.D., and a person of some influence, however, as his threat to the governor of the women's prison, and his treatment of the night editor prove.

In accordance with modern German usage I have adhered to the original in dropping the "von," when intimates of the same social class are speaking to or of each other, maintaining it in the more formal intercourse and the reports tendered by social inferiors.

Readers should note that in the currency now prevailing, the amounts staked by Hull and his friends would be tens of thousands, and his total losses would run into many millions.

Cf98654

DR. MABUSE

I

THE distinguished-looking elderly gentleman introduced himself and, as usual, nobody caught the name. He wore a suit of fashionable and well-cut clothes, however, and his scarf-pin was a single white pearl in a somewhat quaint setting, its dazzling purity recalling the whiteness of a lovely blonde's shoulders, as Karstens remarked. Moreover, he at once placed a sum of twenty thousand marks upon the table in front of him.

He had been brought to the club by young Hull, the heir to an industrial concern worth millions, into which his father allowed him to dip freely. Play was started immediately, and the stranger courteously agreed to the game proposed, which was vingt-et-un. The stakes were unlimited, and the first one to hold the bank was Ritter.

At first there was nothing unusual about the game. Gains and losses alternated, but soon it was noticed that Hull was losing, and this began just at the time when it was the elderly gentleman's turn to play banker. At the start it was hundred-mark notes that Hull lost, but he played on calmly, resigned to his ill-luck. Notes of smaller value were now mingled with the piles of thousands the visitor had put in front of him.

It was only outwardly, however, that Hull appeared undisturbed. He felt a good deal of excitement within, and a veil seemed to be obscuring his mental vision. His bank-notes fluttered across to the stranger without his appearing aware of the fact. His senses seemed to be imprisoned in a delicate, invisible web, pressing ever more and more closely upon him.

He drank a brandy and soda, and then ordered a bottle of champagne. The only effect of that was to make him open another compartment of his pocket-book and bring out the thousand-mark notes which he had procured from the bank that morning. His bad luck became really fantastic. Even when he held good cards it seemed as if in some obscure region of his mind a mysterious warning sealed his lips, and instead of staking a substantial sum, he wagered a trifling amount merely.

It was now the visitor's turn to pass on the office of banker, but he volunteered to continue to hold it on account of Hull. He said: "If you gentlemen do not object, I will remain banker for a few more rounds. You see how the money seems to cling to me. I am the guest of your hospitable club, so please consider how difficult my position is with regard to Herr von Hull, and grant my request." His speech was polite, and carefully enunciated, yet there was a masterful ring about the words, as if the speaker would brook no refusal.

The club attendant eyed the guest suspiciously, but he was using the cards provided by the club and fresh packs were opened every time. The play grew more animated. A good deal had been drunk, and several round the table were slightly intoxicated. The guest did not refrain from drinking, and his behaviour was in no way peculiar. He had a steady and lingering glance for everyone who looked at him, and his large grey eyes seemed to have something dominating about them, hardly in accordance with a mere game. His hands were large and fleshy, and as steady as if carved out of wood, while the fingers of the other men, far younger than he, were already quivering with excitement.

Hull continued playing, though his pocket-book grew lighter and lighter. "What is the matter with me?" he continually asked himself. He wanted to rise from the table and miss a round, so that he could get a mouthful of fresh air at the window and gain a little calm from looking into the silent night. But he sat as if glued to his chair, pressing his elbows down on the crimson cloth, and his thoughts escaped his control, falling into a void like that of deep slumber.

And yet he was not really a reckless player. He was accustomed to reflect and to follow the run of luck, making use of chances that were favourable to him, and reducing his stakes when he saw that the odds were against him.

This evening, however, he seemed to know no bounds. No amount seemed of any value in his eyes, and it appeared as if he were almost glad to lose, and saw his notes change hands with a kind of satisfaction. Something would be sure to happen ere long. The players seemed far too slow in dealing, he thought ; they took an endless time in declaring their stakes, and the notes crawled round the table at a snail's pace.

He drank freely, moreover, and the fancies which he could no longer control were like fiery steeds escaping the driver's restraining hand and running away into a trackless wilderness. The very air seemed to have been exhausted, and nothing existed for him but the game.

Folks began to discuss his bad luck. He certainly drew unlucky cards, but he was playing his hand badly, and taking unreasonable risks. His friends wanted to restrict the stakes and talk of the final round. At first Hull did not take in what they were saying, and they had to explain their words ; then he drew himself up and became furiously angry, shouting in his wrath and beating his fist on the table.

Then the stranger's big eyes seemed to withdraw a little from him and the rest ; their glance appeared to be directed inward and some of their lustre vanished. He laid down his cards and put his money into his pocket, doing it carelessly, however, as if it were merely a handkerchief. There was one more round to finish. Hull called out, "I'll play the bank," and the stranger dealt him the cards. He glanced at them quickly. His total was twenty-one. . . . Then something happened, something strange and inexplicable. He threw his cards face downwards upon the heap, saying, "I have lost again."

The guest immediately showed *his* cards. His

eyes regained their glitter, he counted his points, named the total, and threw his cards down on the table.

It seemed to Hull as if he were falling from an unsteady foothold down into an abyss below. "What have I been doing?" he asked himself in stupefaction and despair. Now at last he began to see everything as clearly as if he had just come into the room: the three glowing electric globes under their protecting dome, the red-covered, lighted table, his friends, the elderly stranger, the scattered cards and the piles of notes.

"Where have I been? What have I been doing?" he stammered.

His brain grew alert again, and the thoughts that had been so confused and obscure now became suddenly clear: it was as if he had drawn aside the curtains and let in the light of day. Then he felt a sudden distrust of himself, which made him uneasy. He held his head in his hands awhile, striving to free it from the weight that seemed to encircle it, and then raising himself erect, he said, "What have I been doing? I held twenty-one in my hand, and then someone called out, in my voice, 'I have lost again.' Look there!" He snatched the cards he had thrown away from the heap where they lay, and turned them over. They were an ace, a ten, and a knave—twenty-one!

The elderly stranger's large grey eyes contracted until the pupils were quite small and seemed to be gazing at a far-distant spot. A shudder went through his body ; it was perceptible, though hastily subdued. Then his breast expanded and his breath came slowly and with difficulty, as if he were having to pump the air direct into himself.

"Too late!" said he, briefly and decisively.

Hull made a slight gesture.

"My remark had nothing to do with you," he said quietly; "it concerned myself only. How much do I owe you?" he asked in a friendly tone.

"Thirty thousand marks!"

Hull emptied his pocket-book.

"You must content yourself till to-morrow afternoon with ten thousand and, of course, an I O U for the rest. Will you be so good as to write the amount and your address in this notebook?"

When Hull got his little notebook back, he read in it:

BALLING,
ROOM 15, EXCELSIOR HOTEL.

He passed over his I O U, smiling pleasantly as he did so.

"I am ready to give you your revenge, Herr von Hull," said Balling, as he rose. "Gentlemen, may I offer you my thanks for the evening's hospitality? Good-night!"

He said this almost abruptly, but in so decisive a tone that it brought the others to their feet. Karstens offered him his car.

"No, thank you; my own is waiting for me."

He walked away somewhat stiffly, as though tired out, and vouchsafed no further farewell of any sort. The club attendant conducted him to the outer door.

"Hull, you are off your head," said Karstens, when the stranger had left the room.

"What did really happen?" asked Hull quietly.

"Ask your purse!"

"My pocket-book is empty. Who won all my money?"

"Your friend there," said Karstens, pointing to the door.

"My friend! I never set eyes on him before! How did he get here?"

"Hull, you certainly are needing the services of a good physician. Emil, bring the telephone directory." Karstens turned over the leaves. "Here we are: Dr. Schramm, Psychopathological treatment, 35, Ludwigstrasse. . . ."

"I don't understand your joke, my dear Karstens."

"Well, who brought this fine vingt-et-un player here but you?"

"That is not true, Karstens."

"Go to No. 35, Ludwigstrasse, my dear fellow, and quickly too."

"Of course it was you who brought him, Hull," said another.

"*I*? *I* brought him? At any rate, I don't remember a thing about it, but it may be so."

Hull then withdrew, exhausted and stupefied, brooding over the problem which had so strangely and suddenly opened up before him that evening.

When he awoke, towards morning, he had a dim and fleeting remembrance, and he seemed to recall the stranger sitting at the same table with him in the Café Bastin. He had an idea that they had been talking together, and that it was about the theatre, but what they had said, and which theatre it was about, he had not the slightest idea.

In the dim recesses of his mind he recalled merely the sensation of a dazzling reflector that seemed to throw its beams upon him during the conversation. Sleep was no longer possible, but, try as he would to pierce these elusive fragments of memory and penetrate to the reality behind them, he was quite unable to make anything out of them.

The next afternoon brought him no enlightenment either. By four o'clock he had obtained the twenty thousand marks, and he made his way to the Excelsior Hotel. At his request a telephone message was sent to Room 15. Herr Balling was there, he was told, and requested the gentleman to send up his card. This Hull did, following close upon it.

In the middle of Room 15 he found a man whom he had never seen in his life before. He was a short, stout, clean-shaven man, apparently an American. He made a very stiff bow.

"I beg your pardon," said Hull. "I must have been directed wrongly. I wanted Room 15."

"This is it," said the other.

"Then Herr Balling must have given me the wrong number."

"My name is Balling."

"This time I am *not* dreaming, I am in full possession of my senses," said Hull to himself, and then aloud, he continued: "But the mystery can soon be explained. Did you write this?" and he extended the notebook in which the stranger of the previous night had written his name and address.

"Certainly not," replied the stout man.

"Then I am not in your debt to the tune of twenty thousand marks?"

"My time is very limited, and I am expecting a friend on business," said the other, looking at his watch.

"I will make way for your friend, sir, at once, and will only put one more question to you. It is not my fault that I am bothering you; I have been misled in some way."

The other nodded.

"Possibly you are acquainted," Hull went on, "with a gentleman of about sixty, with large grey eyes, a big nose and white whiskers. He wears good and well-cut clothes and a tall grey hat, and his name is also Balling."

"I can only repeat that I know nothing about him," said the Balling of No. 15.

Hull thereupon took his leave. Downstairs he asked whether there were a second Herr Balling in the hotel, but the answer was "No." Had Room 15 been occupied by any Herr Balling who had just left? "No." Was the writing in the pocket-book known? Again there was a negative reply. "For the first time in my life," thought Hull, "I find myself unable to pay a debt of honour."

Gradually he became uneasy. What a mysterious affair this was! Nothing of the kind had ever occurred before. He had won money and lost it again . . . sometimes much, and at other times little. He had been in financial straits. He had had some trouble about a girl he cared for. Once, indeed, he had been seriously wounded in a duel. Yet all that was comprehensible and straightforward, so to speak. But this tale of Herr Balling and the twenty thousand marks had some mystery or other behind it. He had forgotten that it was he who introduced the stranger to the club. He had played as if he had lost his head. He had incurred a debt of twenty thousand marks, and his creditor had furnished a name and address which did actually exist but were not his, and, moreover, he would not have the money. . . .

If it had not happened that Hull had no mistress at the moment, he could have talked this affair over. He pondered over it alone while he walked along Lenbach Square and the Promenade, looking everybody in the face in the hope that he might encounter the distinguished stranger among them. He went to the Café Bastin and scanned all the faces there. He sat down at a table and waited to see whether the *genius loci* would be favourable to him and recall the vanished recollections ; but nothing came of it, and he stood up again, a prey to increasing uneasiness. It seemed as if in the invisible depths behind him another power, extraneous to himself, was pursuing him, pressing down upon him, trying to jump on his back as a monkey might do, and lead him into unlucky adventures of some kind or another.

Hull forced himself to return to his lonely bachelor chambers. There he met Karstens, and greeted him with relief. But Karstens at once asked:

" Well, has your memory returned? "

" My dear fellow, there's something wrong with me ! "

" With the twenty thousand marks? "

" No, there they are ! " and he tapped his breast pocket. " Nobody wants them, it appears. There is a Herr Balling in Room 15 at the 'Excelsior,' but he isn't my man, and we've never met before. He has never played vingt-et-un, and nobody owes *him* twenty thousand marks. I can't get rid of the money, and it makes me feel creepy ! Something is going to happen to me. Who *is* there near me whom I cannot see? There's certainly something wrong with me ! "

" Come to the club ! Perhaps your Herr Balling will go there to fetch the money himself."

" Yes, but what about the real Balling in No. 15? "

" Well, that's certainly odd, I grant you. Come along."

" All right. Perhaps he'll be there."

In the club that night there was no play. The curious circumstance had so worked upon the members' imagination that no one felt the need of trying his luck. Hull was overwhelmed with well-meaning or obtuse advice.

" Emil," said one of them to the attendant, " what did his car look like? "

" An excellent one, Herr Baron, a twenty-horse-power at the least—a closed car with a body like a royal cradle, if one may use such a comparison nowadays . . . so smooth and well rounded and polished. It started off with a great bound, and soon vanished. It was a first-class car. I kept a close eye on the gentleman, and I saw that he had the devil's own luck when he played against Herr von Hull. He played quite straight, however."

They learnt nothing more about the stranger. Nobody came either to the club or to Hull's rooms to ask for the twenty thousand marks or to offer him his revenge.

A few days afterwards Hull made acquaintance with a girl who was performing jazz dances in the Bonbonnière. She was partly Mexican, she told him. She soon effected a diversion in his thoughts, and in her company he rapidly got rid of the twenty thousand marks which he could not pay over to the stranger.

"It seems as if you were meant to give the money to a woman instead of to a man," remarked Karstens, when he told him that he was now free of his worries once more.

II

ABOUT a fortnight later the circles to whom the life of the day is only a wearisome burden till the hour of play arrives, when the nerve-tension is once more excited, were all agog with the stories of a stranger who simply loaded himself with money wherever he chanced to play. The tales varied constantly. At one time the stranger was a young sportsman, at another a worthy provincial; now he was a fair-bearded man looking like an artist, and again a robber and murderer who had escaped from justice. Some said he was a dethroned prince, others that he was a Frenchman. Another time they declared him to be a citizen of Leipzig, who was smuggling pit-coal from the Saar into Bavaria by way of Switzerland, or profiteering on the money exchange with New York and Rio de Janeiro. There was endless variety in the descriptions, but the imagination put the various forms together and made one personality out of them.

Circles that were exclusive had ceased to exist. Money was a key that opened all doors, the wearing of a fur coat could conceal any calling, and a diamond scarf-pin shed lustre on any character. A man could go into whatsoever company he desired.

There was no longer any sense of security, and the mysterious gambler might turn up in any place, at any time. He might be anybody's neighbour. The authorities were constantly notified of swindling players, and though in no case could their swindles be proved, their luck was so continuous that it did not seem possible for it to be due to ordinary play.

Through the Bonbonnière lady Hull frequently spent his evenings in places where gambling was indulged in. He heard much about this swindler at play, and from many different quarters, for theatrical folk are always particularly interested in anything out of the common, especially where masquerading is concerned. But Hull's brain was of a matter-of-fact and ordinary kind. He did, indeed, still think about the twenty thousand marks, but mostly with the comfortable reflection that they had been used in a very different way from that for which they were destined. Now that the story of his forgetfulness had ceased to haunt him he had become quite convinced that his friends had played an elaborate trick upon him, that his I O U and the twenty thousand marks had been discharged, and the only disreputable part in the affair had been played by Balling, who, on account of Emil's watch upon him, had not felt himself secure. His astonishment was all the greater, therefore, when a certain Herr von Wenk was announced and the story of that night's escapade was brought up once more.

Hull refused to discuss the matter, but the visitor told him he was a State Attorney and showed his credentials. In the most polite way possible

he continued to question him, saying that his official status obliged him to pursue the inquiry. Had Hull been able to communicate with Cara Carozza, his *chère amie* from the Bonbonnière, instead of having to face this man by himself, he would have known what to say and how much to conceal. He was greatly enamoured of Cara Carozza, and by no means inclined to go into this matter and rake up bygones for the sake of the country's morals.

" You will pardon my introducing a personal note, but I understand that you are very intimate with Mdlle. Cara Carozza, of the Bonbonnière? "

" Good Lord ! He knows that, does he? " ejaculated Hull to himself.

" Can you make me acquainted with this lady? It would further the task which the State has laid upon me, but I would ask you to introduce me to her as a private individual. It is unnecessary to assure you that I take you for a man of irreproachable character and quite above suspicion. Nothing is known to the detriment of the lady, either. You will be able to render a service to the country and perhaps to yourself as well. Henceforward you are under the direct protection of the police. Do not be uneasy ; it is possibly quite an unnecessary precaution. You can rest assured that you will not suffer in any way through the services you may be able to render to the general public and the State."

" What am I to gather from all this, sir? " said Hull hesitatingly.

" You must have come to some conclusion about your extraordinarily lucky opponent? "

" To be quite candid, I did feel uneasy for a time, Herr von Wenk. There seemed to be something very mysterious about the affair. Finally, I imagined that my forgetting that I had brought the stranger to the club was a feeble joke on the part of my friends."

"But the Herr Balling in the hotel, who was quite different from the Balling at the club?"

"That certainly is a mystery to me still, but a false address is often given for the purpose of evading payment. In this case, however, it occurred in order to avoid receiving twenty thousand marks."

"May it not be explained," continued the State Attorney, "by the fact that this elderly gentleman had been cheating in some way? He was set on his guard by some fact unknown to you, and contented himself with the money he had already won. He gave a name which occurred to him, and of which he had some knowledge. Unless, of course, the Balling in the 'Excelsior' was the Balling from your club, disguised. But you say that the one was short and stout and the other of rather imposing presence. Do you still play, Herr von Hull?"

"A little, now and again."

"With Mdlle. Carozza, perhaps? I am on friendly terms with one of your intimates, with Karstens. He will introduce me to you, and we shall be able to renew our acquaintance socially. You must not be prejudiced by the fact that it has had an official beginning. I hope to be able to count you on my side."

The barrister took his leave, and returned to his official chambers.

A month previous to this occurrence, in a lawsuit in which he was professionally engaged, Wenk had first noted the extent to which the gambling fever possessed the city. He himself liked the nervous excitement and the appeal to the imagination afforded by the relations between judge, counsel and accused in the course of his calling. In earlier years he had been a regular card-player. He was not a passionate lover of games of chance, but he enjoyed the opportunity of testing the effect of play upon his own self-control, of observing his fellows and noting the enticement afforded by the devious course of luck.

During the lawsuit above mentioned he realized what a danger to the people lay in gambling. The change from war conditions to a state of affairs which afforded the nation little relief from tension had not sobered its imagination, but rather excited it yet more strongly. Perhaps, in the first instance, the war news was largely responsible for extravagant phantasies. For a week, sometimes a month, at a time the reports were like a lottery for the whole nation. Then a fateful movement was set on foot by which whole districts of people were seized with a passion for gambling, a movement designed by the military authorities to induce them to replete the army coffers. Increased wages were offered to the war workers and money was flung into manufacturing concerns. Commerce of all kinds was affected ere long, and everywhere the flood-gates were opened. When goods grew more and more scarce, money overflowed all its channels. Wenk saw clearly that the folks in high places who had believed they could purchase the soul of a nation for money were to blame for the tragic outcome of the war as far as Germany was concerned, and so, too, were they responsible for the political development. Instead of the ideal of an immortal soul prepared for any and every renunciation as long as it fulfilled its duty to the community, they had set up an idol—money—and the whole nation was worshipping it.

Then the war came to an end. Money decreased in value and the idea of it played a yet more dominant part in the life of a nation now deprived of its success and brilliance in the world outside. Hundreds of thousands had become accustomed to a life of inaction, and for many years now it had been nothing but pure chance whether they lived or died. Their only preoccupation had been to exercise authority over others and to live entirely on their nerves. They brought with them to the more stable conditions of life the gambling spirit born of their war experience. They had grown accustomed to taking risks, and they continued to rely on luck. They resumed their former mode of life, but brought to it the atmosphere of their recent experiences, transferring the nerve-racking and hazardous existence of those days to the conditions which now obtained. To some extent this was inevitable, but those who looked beyond the present and wanted to see a new era of prosperity dawn must strain every nerve and exercise the strictest self-denial. Thus only could there be hope of recovery.

The great lawsuit had afforded Wenk one example after another of the development of this spirit of gambling, and in its course had taken

him frequently into the company of those who lived but for, and by, games of chance. His convictions were well grounded and his recognition of the national danger constantly confirmed to an alarming extent. In the attics and basements folks were gambling for five-mark pieces, and on the first floors for five-thousand. They laid their wagers in the streets and the lanes, at home and abroad. They gambled with cards, with goods, with ideas and with enjoyments, with power and with weakness, with themselves and with their nearest and dearest.

At this period, too, people who were not naturally given to hazardous risks, who were habitually calm and self-reliant, were wont to be guided by chance conditions and circumstances, instead of combating them where necessary.

Wenk was an official who had reached his thirty-eighth year in a peaceful and well-ordered career. During the war he had volunteered for the Flying Corps, because he had a love of sport and remembered the fascination which the element of danger had held for him in early youth. The experience had fired his imagination, and he returned to his career with more impetuous feelings than had been his when he quitted it. The lawsuit against the gamblers, and all he had learned in the course of it, had excited him considerably. He had gone at once to the head of the Police Department, had described what he had seen and experienced, and represented to him that this new disease must be combated if the whole body were not to be destroyed. As money lost its value and the necessities of life increased, the nation could do nothing but seek to augment its mass of paper currency by trying first one speculation and then another. The connection between supply and demand required both time and work before it could become normal again, and so by degrees it had come about that the pulsations of commercial life were regulated merely by chance.

The Minister smiled ; he was new to his office. He said, "The nation is sound enough ; you are a pessimist ! "

But Wenk replied, "It is diseased and rotten ! How can it be healthy, after such years and such a life? "

Then the Minister, who felt his position somewhat insecure and was willing to try anything that might lead to stability, yielded the point, and created a new post, which Wenk at once took over.

The erstwhile State Attorney and official was at once caught up in the vortex of his new office. He devoted all his time and energies to it. He did not establish himself in an arm-chair in a comfortable well-furnished room, but began to build up his position from the very bottom, became a police-spy and a detective, unwearied in his efforts to collect all the evidence he could lay his hands on. He did it all himself, and when he realized, as he soon did, the slight extent of his own powers when pitted against the widespread national vice, he conceived the idea of recruiting a guard and rallying force from the ranks of the victims.

Accordingly, he began with men whose wealth was not displayed in their houses, but who, through their connection with the social order which had

come to grief, had been forced into the opposition, both as human beings and as politicians. He knew that none were more responsible for the existing state of affairs than these men, because, at a time when resistance was a necessity, they had been cowardly and kept out of the way. But he knew, too, that in them a new force of decision had come to birth, that they longed to make good where they had failed.

Above all, there were the rich young men without any profession. In the disorganization brought about in the country by the depreciation and disorder of the currency, they were unable to carry on life as before. Their society was permeated by the "new rich," who made use of them because they allowed themselves to be made use of.

The State Attorney von Wenk had turned to his whilom comrades, from whom the divers duties of his office had long separated him, and the man whom he had first encountered and won over to his side was Karstens. It was from him that he had learned all the circumstances of Hull's strange and suspicious gambling adventure. He compared Hull's story with the other material which he had hastily collected. Fresh complaints were constantly being made about swindlers who worked so cleverly that no taint of suspicion could attach to them, yet who won so consistently that it was not conceivable that this could be merely luck. From some similarities in detail in the various stories Wenk was inclined to refer all these cases to a band of swindlers operating in concert, and he even had the idea that it might all be the work of one man. But this was hardly more than an impression. Hull's experience was the strangest and most mysterious of all these cases, and it was fraught with the greatest danger, but Wenk had a notion that therein lay the solution to all the rest.

After Wenk's departure, Hull held a long argument with himself. The uncompromising yet thoroughly courteous way in which Wenk had effected an entrance had made an impression upon him. He guessed what the official desired, for he himself was often dissatisfied with his way of living, although his love of ease usually made him drive such thoughts away.

Under ordinary circumstances he would have pursued his usual search for enjoyment without restraint or reflection, either until considerations of health had set a limit to his dissipations or until a marriage, either arranged or entered into voluntarily, had caused him to "range himself."

Hull by no means approved of the course of affairs in Germany which had led to the Treaty of Versailles. He at once asked himself, "Where were you in 1918, when the retreat began? and earlier still, when it first began to be planned? Are not you, Hull, and all your kind, responsible for it?" . . . That was what Herr von Wenk's words had implied.

But Hull found in himself no trace of such individuality as might have saved the situation, and he dismissed these ideas from his mind. He drove to see Cara Carozza and told her of Wenk's visit.

"For God's sake, don't get us mixed up with your State Attorney, dear Eddie," said she.

"But . . . but . . . do we cheat? Are we dishonest? Are we profiteers, or climbers? We merely keep ourselves going. What are you thinking about, darling?"

"Eddie, a game of cards in full swing—someone holding the bank—closed doors, and a State official looking on! That might prove a hanging matter!"

"But I promised him I would bring you!"

"More fool you!" she exclaimed. "You ought to have got out of it somehow. Elsie is bringing her friend to-day, and we are going to Schramm's. Karstens has already telephoned that he will be there."

"Then Wenk would be coming anyhow, so *that's* all right, as it happens!"

The head-waiter of Schramm's little restaurant, recently opened in one of the residential streets and decorated throughout in most eccentric style by a modern professional, led Karstens and Wenk from the dinner-table to a box at the rear. Thence a winding stair led to a room which had no other exit and seemed to have no windows of any kind.

In the middle of the room stood a fairly large table of an oval shape, but so arranged that every occupant of an arm-chair was sitting in a hollowed-out niche of his own, with the leaves of the table under his elbows on both sides. The table was formed of quaint, curiously veined Kiefersfeld marble. In the middle only was there a perfectly white oval left. Around the table, behind the players' chairs, the floor was raised and the walls furnished with full-length reclining lounges, upon which rested crushed-strawberry-coloured cushions with black designs. A large shade of polished glass attached to a brass electrolier hung low over the table and reflected the electric light bulbs which gleamed forth from silver brackets. The walls above the strawberry-coloured cushions were inlaid with the same warm marble as that on the table.

Wenk was introduced to Cara Carozza.

"I could not keep the secret, Herr von Wenk. I was obliged to tell my lady friend here. Please don't be vexed with me!"

Wenk gave a slight bow, in which there was a trace of annoyance.

Baccarat was being played. Karstens turned to Wenk: "The young man with the fair beard is the only stranger. All the others play here regularly."

Wenk glanced at the stranger and met his eyes. He noticed that they were fastened on him, and he immediately looked beyond and above them, but he felt that the stranger had noticed they were speaking of him. Whenever he looked at him again he found that his eyes were fixed on the table.

The stranger played a quiet, restrained game. He frequently lost. Then Wenk ceased to pay attention to him and turned to the others, whom he watched in turns. They all had their eyes fastened on the white oval, whereon the cards were being dealt. They seldom looked in any other direction. There were gentlemen in evening dress, ladies in *décolletée,* expensively and fashionably attired. The passion for gambling had seized and carried them all away.

"It is none of these," said Wenk to himself, "so it can only be that young man with the sandy beard."

He began to study him afresh, but only to find that the latter returned his gaze. Wenk then turned his attention to Cara Carozza. He saw her wholly given over to her game, sitting next to Hull, to whose money she helped herself when she lost. If she won, however, she added the winnings to her own heap. In the player on her other side Wenk thought he recognized a well-known tenor from the State Theatre, whose picture often appeared in shop-windows.

"Is that Marker?" he asked Karstens, who nodded in reply.

Wenk won a trifling sum. He played only till he had persuaded himself that there was no work for him here. Then he gave up his place to an elderly gentleman who had already been sitting behind him for some time, boring him by remarks upon his method of play. He seated himself on one of the lounges and watched the play for a short time longer. Then he took his departure, Karstens accompanying him. Hull remained with the Carozza girl.

When Wenk had descended a few steps he looked back at the table. It seemed as if the fair-bearded man with large mouse-grey eyes followed his departure eagerly, and then directed an urgent and threatening look towards Carozza, but it might have been only an illusion.

When Wenk reached the foot of the stairs, he unexpectedly found himself for a moment face to face with a lady who had already laid her hand on the balustrade to ascend. He looked right into her eyes and started back in amazement, while he inclined his head, as if doing homage, before he passed on. He wanted to say to Karstens, "I have never seen so beautiful a woman!" but that seemed to him like betraying a secret, and, consumed with desire, he bore her image with him as he made his way silently through the deserted streets. When at home, he soon fell asleep, but the two mouse-grey eyes, which were far older than the carefully arranged sandy beard, seemed to fasten on his breast as he slept. They appeared to be trying to colour the ace of hearts with his own life-blood.

When he awoke next morning he was conscious of nothing but an intense longing to meet once more the lady he had encountered on the stairs.

III

THE next night Wenk was invited to a *soirée musicale* in the neighbourhood of Schramm's restaurant. A young pianist was performing modern phantasies. Wenk was bored, became fidgety and was the prey to wandering thoughts. It seemed to him as if he were neglecting some special opportunity elsewhere. He grew so uneasy that he finally slipped away, merely leaving a card of apology for his hostess.

He reached Schramm's and was about to pass quickly by. Then it occurred to him to look up at the first floor of the villa where the new restaurant and gaming-house was established, and try to see the windows of the little room in which he had played the previous night. The ground-floor windows were large, and through their old-gold curtains a faint light gleamed, but the four windows on the first floor showed no signs of occupation. Yet he said to himself, "Behind those unlighted windows there gleams light . . . *her* light," and he went in, full of hope that he might encounter the mysterious lady who had so bewitched him.

The head-waiter approached him at once, took his hat and coat, whispering, "The marble table?" and looking closely at the visitor as he did so. Wenk gave a nod of assent, and the head-waiter rapidly preceded him to the back, Wenk following more leisurely. Then he was led up the winding stair.

The first person he saw at the gaming-table was the sandy-bearded man. He sat in his niche, his broad shoulders bent forward, with his eyes fixed in a steady gaze upon a player opposite. His attitude was that of a beast of prey who has already played his victim and is only waiting to pounce upon him. He seemed to be all sinews—at least, that was the impression he made upon Wenk, who started back at his aspect.

There was one empty seat. Wenk took it and drew out his pocket-book. An idea crossed his mind, that something special had occurred at the table. He saw all the players cowering over the little heaps of money in front of them, and yet there was in them all a distinct, even if unintentional, glance given to one among their number.

The sandy-bearded stranger was holding the bank, and now he looked up. Wenk noticed how, at first, annoyed at the disturbance, he raised his eyes towards him, and then it was clearly noticeable that his face quivered. At the same moment, however, he closed his jaws so firmly that his beard stood out round them. The rest was a mere impression, but this Wenk saw clearly. A shudder went through him as if at some sudden and dangerous encounter. At this moment the "banker" displayed the cards he held. Someone said, "Basch has lost again!" All turned to look openly at the pale thin man whom they had been furtively regarding when Wenk entered.

With a quiet and drowsy movement Basch pushed the notes lying on the oval in front of him over to the stranger. He grabbed at them like a bird of prey. The loser sank back in his seat, and in the same slow and dreamy way he brought out a fresh thousand-mark note and laid it in front of him.

"How much are you losing now?" said a lady from the divan behind Basch. "You will have a lucky life. When one loses to *that* extent! I regard you as a champion. You must establish a record. . . . In losing, you know! Then you will be so lucky in life that I shall want to . . ." She broke off in embarrassment. Then Wenk, with a delicious tremor in his veins, recognized the speaker as the lady whom he had so abruptly encountered on the stairs on the previous evening.

"Get ready to stake," said the sandy-bearded man in a harsh voice, drowning the speaker's concluding words.

Basch had not answered her. As the banker called out, he merely made a movement of his hand over his thousand-mark note, a movement as if he were secretly conjuring it to do his bidding.

He looked at his cards; it was his turn, and no one else was punting.

"Do you take one?" said the banker sharply.

Basch shook his head dreamily. Wenk noticed Cara Carozza's auburn-tressed head behind one of the spectators, but his glance always returned to the other woman.

The banker bought a Court card and disclosed his own hand. He had only a total of four. Basch, too, with a feverish movement, laid his on the table. His points were but three.

"He plays as if he were drugged!" whispered Wenk's neighbour. "To hold three, and yet not take a card! What folly!"

As he raked in his gains the sandy-bearded stranger gave a hasty glance at Wenk. The latter felt himself pitted against the winner. He increased his stakes, won, then lost for several rounds, and won again.

Basch continued to lose every time. By degrees Wenk ranged himself more and more on his side. He staked his money as if it were a weapon for Basch against the stranger, a weapon with which to strike him down.

Wenk noticed that the latter looked at no one but himself and Basch. He therefore accepted the challenge, and threw himself eagerly and wholeheartedly into the struggle, impelled by some mysterious power that incited him against the banker. He forgot himself altogether, and no longer played for the purpose of observing and discovering. He abandoned himself to the game and played like all those whom he had come to rescue from the gaming-table. He even forgot the lovely lady. When he first realized this, he was ashamed, and for the first time during the evening he glanced round the room to see whether Hull were there.

But it was not Hull who now sat behind Cara Carozza. Wenk's search was vain; Hull was not present. Cara sat with a stranger behind a player with whom she was sharing the stakes.

Then Wenk came to himself. He stopped playing and at once left the hall, sorely vexed with himself. When he was on the winding stair he turned and saw that the stranger with the fair sandy beard was also rising from the table.

Wenk had ordered his car to call for him at the house where the musical party was held, and did not remember this till he had walked some distance. Then he retraced his steps and drove home. He went to bed at once, but he could get no sleep, for the thought continually recurred that he had made a mistake to come away, that he ought to have stayed and talked to Basch.

He got out of bed again and went through a bundle of depositions in order to quiet his conscience. In going through these documents, written by men who were strangers to him, he got the impression that all of them, losing so much that they could not but ascribe it to foul play, must have sat at the gaming-table very much as Basch did. Had he remained and behaved in a sensible fashion, he would have had an opportunity of seeing for himself at first hand what had hitherto reached him through the testimony of others.

Then Wenk became thoroughly discouraged. "I must set to work in quite another way," he said to himself. "Goodwill and industry are not sufficient. Self-denial and inexorable self-discipline and a little more cunning are necessary! I must make use of every ruse that my opponent displays. . . . I must make use of disguise and secret spying. I must be prepared to stake myself on the game . . . must be myself the snare, if

I do not want to be caught in it like a silly pigeon. . . . A State official with a false beard . . . a Browning concealed in his fist . . . a jockey-cap, a tall hat, a wig, and so on, like the cinema stage. . . ."

In the looking-glass he contemplated his clean-shaven face, finding that when he made grimaces, drew down the corners of his mouth, stretched his jaws, and tried the effect of a beard made out of paper shavings, his features lent themselves very well to disguise.

The next day he procured a complete outfit from the Criminal Investigation Department. With the help of a Secret Service expert, he tried all the necessary arts, learned to plaster on a beard, to alter his complexion, make himself look younger or older, change his appearance by scars, and so on. He could now make up as a country cousin, a dispatch-bearing cyclist, a taxicab driver, a porter, waiter, steward, window-cleaner, an "unemployed," and other characters. In the morning he made an exhaustive examination of the criminal museum which the police had collected, studied the photographs he found there, returned to his various make-ups, and worked with the zeal of a fanatic.

Thus the day passed, and by evening he felt he had become a stronger man. He was at once more discreet and yet more daring. He would have liked to make a tour at once of all the gaming-houses in the city.

He went only to Schramm's, however. He had long been considering whether he should not appear there in some sort of disguise, more for the purpose of making a trial of it and learning to feel at home in it than for actually starting upon his work. He was still more anxious to go in the hope of meeting the sandy-bearded man again and seeing him play, for he was desirous of atoning for his shortcomings of the previous evening, which had left a painful impression upon his mind. He would have liked to meet Basch again and talk to him about the evils of gambling, from which he had suffered so much. He went, therefore, just as he was.

It was already late when he got there. Hull was present, but he saw neither the fair-bearded stranger nor Basch. He only heard that the former had left immediately after him, a fact which all had noticed. After he left, Basch had remained sitting as if utterly prostrate. He had not played again, and suddenly he vanished. No one knew him well. He had never been to Schramm's before.

The lady who sat behind him estimated that his losses must have been thirty to thirty-five thousand marks. The blond stranger had won it all, but he did not win until he began to hold the bank. Everything had been absolutely in order. The attendant who furnished the cards was thoroughly reliable.

While talking about the previous night's play they stopped their game. Then Cara said:

"There are people who are born players, and if they take only one card in their hands it is sure to be an ace. They can do what they like; the power is stronger than they are; it is their guiding spirit, their God."

But Elsie did not agree with her. She thought that every player once in his life came upon a series of lucky days. They lay stretched out before him, handed to him by his good fairy, for every man had a good fairy. One must not give up expecting to meet with those times of good fortune, for one day one could gather in the winnings as quickly as ripe apples in the autumn. . . .

No one knew the man with the sandy beard. Basch had brought him to Schramm's, and the first evening they had gone away together. He might be a dethroned prince, he was so imperious and abrupt in his speech. A dethroned prince in want of money, no doubt.

"I have a strange feeling," said Hull, "as if I had already played against him once. . . ."

"Nonsense!" said Cara.

In his mind the fancy grew stronger. "It is not so much that I have played with him, but as if he had done me some very serious internal injury, affecting my very blood; but how, and when, and where, I have no idea. It must have been in a dream."

"He has evil eyes," said a woman's voice, which Wenk seemed to recognize. He looked in that direction, but with the bright light on the table the corner seemed as dark as a cave and he could descry no one.

Cara answered the voice in the darkness in a tone that seemed to have anger in it: "Evil eyes! What do you mean by that? Surely at the gaming-table no one looks like a saint!"

From the corner there came the words, "He seemed to look at Basch like a beast of prey eyeing his victim!"

"That was exactly the impression he gave me!" exclaimed Wenk.

He at once rose hastily and went to the corner, entered the dark niche and started back, for the speaker was the beautiful unknown! A glow suffused Wenk's features and his heart began to beat violently, as if its strokes must be heard. Then he pulled himself together, saying, "I really must be mad! I am searching for a criminal and am about to fall in love with someone whom I may have to send to prison to-morrow. This is really idiotic!" He recovered his presence of mind, bowed to the stranger and said:

"I should be greatly interested, madam, to hear how you reached a conclusion which so exactly resembles my own?"

"It cannot be anything else," said the lady, smiling, "than an unusual evidence of secret sympathy between me and a State official!"

"She knows me, then!" said Wenk to himself in astonishment. "But how could that come about, except through Cara Carozza? A State official, guardian and representative of the law, and avenger of any breach of it, himself violating its rules! It was absolutely fantastic. Yes, it must have been the Carozza girl. From the niche he looked into the brilliantly lighted room, where the dyed tresses of the dancer gleamed forth between the heads. "So it was you!" he said to himself; "you want to bring my plans to nought, you good-for-nothing! . . ."

Then he remembered the glance the blond had given her that first evening, and he ended, "You are his decoy!" Now he realized the connection between them. It was the dancer who brought the blond his victims. He breathed a threat: "Just you wait; I am taking it all in!"

"Our agreement seems to have struck you forcibly," said the lady, interrupting his thoughts.

"As a matter of fact, my thoughts were wandering, and I beg your pardon, madam," said Wenk; "it is incomprehensible that any strange influence should be able to intervene in *your* neighbourhood, but it can be explained, nevertheless. . . ."

He did not continue. Two ideas suddenly obtruded themselves. This lady was undoubtedly an excellent observer. If only he could procure her help! But the other thought stirred his pulses. Why not abandon all this searching and spying and following after criminals, and strive to win the love of a woman such as this, beautiful as a queen and stately as a goddess! Then he felt her touching his arm hastily.

"Don't speak," she whispered, "I beg of you!"

At the same moment Wenk saw three gentlemen entering the circle of light in the room. The first was a young man whom he knew by sight, for a few days previously he had noticed him at an exhibition of Futurist paintings, as the buyer of the most unusual and bizarre of these. He had asked the name of the purchaser, and the attendant had replied, "Graf Told bought them. There he is," pointing to the young man, who had just now entered the room.

"Herr von Wenk," said the lady in a whisper, "will you do me a great favour?"

"With pleasure, madam. I am at your command."

"I am anxious to leave this room within the next few minutes without being seen. Can you help me to do this?"

"Certainly," said Wenk.

"How can I accomplish my purpose?"

"That is quite simple. You see the entrance to that staircase; it is only a few steps to it. You must look at it well, to be able to find it in the dark. I am certain that I know where the electric light switch is. It is just over the first section of the stairs. I will go there and turn it out, and you can make use of the darkness to gain the staircase. When you have passed me I will stand directly in the way of anyone who tries to follow you or to reach the switch."

"Splendid! Thank you very much."

Her escape was safely made. When Wenk saw the lady had reached the bottom, he turned the light on again and entered the room with a light laugh, saying, "Please forgive me; I did it for a joke, and I did not realize you would be in total darkness."

They all laughed, but the dancer was standing, pale and disturbed, at the head of the winding stair, which she had reached at one bound. She recovered herself quickly and returned to Hull, begging him to drive her home. Wenk accompanied them.

As they were about to leave the gaming-hall, Wenk saw the head-waiter hand Hull an envelope. He went to an empty table beneath a lamp, opened it, and drew out a little note. It seemed as if an invisible thrust had sent him staggering. Cara went up to him, but he crumpled up the note, stuffing it into his pocket, and rose and followed the others out.

When they had reached the street they parted, but Hull turned and came back to Wenk, saying, in a voice trembling with excitement, "I *must* speak to you. This very night! Can you see me at your rooms in an hour's time? It is something horrible; I am being shadowed!"

"Look at this!" said Hull, as he entered Wenk's rooms an hour later. With a despairing gesture he flung an envelope on Wenk's table. The latter opened it and drew a small card from it. On it there stood:

HERR BALLING,
I O U
20,000 (twenty thousand) marks
payable November 21st, 4 p.m.
EDGAR HULL.

"My I O U," said Hull in a toneless voice, and after a pause, "Look at the other side!"

On the reverse side Wenk read: "You are warned. The reason I did not take your twenty thousand marks is my affair alone. The transaction lies between you and me. Play is play, and no State Attorney has anything to do with it."

Wenk was staggered. "Yes, yes, yes," he said, and found no other words to express the storm which raged within him. Then after a while, as he collected himself, he said:

"We sat near him, you and I! We could have seized him by the arm, one on each side, you . . . and I! Do you understand?"

"I am shadowed!" whispered Hull, who seemed to have no thought of anything except his immediate danger.

"Do you understand? Do you know who Balling is? Your Balling? your distinguished old gentleman? It is the man with the fair beard who was at Schramm's. He is your Herr Balling! Good heavens! . . . We could have put our hands on his shoulder!"

Hull merely gasped. Now he knew why the sandy-bearded man had seemed familiar to him; his were the large, fierce grey eyes!

"Yes," he said, "it *is* the same man!"

"He has disappeared," exclaimed Wenk; "he no longer comes to Schramm's. And as for you, Herr Hull, we shall henceforth have you under our special care, but you must endeavour to meet our wishes and be constantly on your guard."

IV

HULL departed, and Wenk, alone with the impressions which the evening's experiences had left on his mind, asked himself, "Why did the fair unknown try to get away so secretly? Have I made another mistake? Has my helping her in her flight placed a weapon in the hand which would strike at me and my work?"

His agitation increased, but he dismissed his doubts of the lady. No, he felt he could rely upon her. And now the realization of the connection between Hull and the gambler, and all the other stories about the latter, set his mind working in a fresh direction, and other ideas began to develop. He seemed to hear the beating of the wings of some new and mighty force that was invading his life. Conflicts were going on in his physical nature, his phantasy, his nervous energy and endurance. His knowledge of men and his dominion over them were being put to the test. Thinking fiercely, he smoked cigar after cigar, and clouds of smoke surrounded him. It was spring-time, storm, sunshine, and again storm, in his blood. His muscles were engaged in an imaginary and heroic conflict with mysterious and mighty giants who were seeking to strangle his fellow-men. He had seized one of them by the false reddish beard which he had assumed, in semblance of humanity.

From the town, lapped in slumber, it seemed as if the spirit of the age rushed into his room—an age fraught with dangers, demands, and tension of all kinds. It demanded men—demanded of all men all their ambition, self-discipline, intelligence, selflessness . . . selflessness. It should take him! There he was, free alike from arrogance and from indolence! Might there not be, he asked himself in his ecstatic monologue, a new democracy which should redeem the past? Was that the goal towards which the present gloom was leading mankind? Was he rising on the stormy wave? He would no longer drift along, striving to help his country as a mere idealist. No, he would stand firm on his feet; struggle, contest, but not submit! Freed from thoughts of self, he would expend the last drop of his blood to become what he had learned to be; he would yield all he had to give, to the very last red drop.

It was not his career that was at stake, but that which all men have in common, both in conflict with each other and in helping one another. It was the surge of humanity in which mortals, for good or ill, were engulfed in a gloom which none could dominate and subdue. In that night of reflection the lawyer saw the criminal no longer as a being of an inferior order. He envisaged him as a man whose pulses raced madly along, his senses stirred by the powers of hell; a man whose lusts and appetites, demon-fed, should overreach themselves and be brought to nought, and he, Wenk, should save and deliver him. The fighter should gain the ascendancy over his adversary.

In imagination Wenk was now struggling with the blond stranger, and in him he had a powerful opponent. He suspected even more than he already knew. If he could relieve mankind of him, he would have accomplished something by which he could advance further.

The song which Wenk's heart had been singing for the last two hours suddenly seemed to be familiar to him, and in astonishment he realized that the state to which he had now come had been foreshadowed in his boyhood's days, even before his university career, his military training, and his entry into law, when as yet no idea of the justification of humanity had fired his blood. Thinking over his lonely bachelor existence, without any womanly influence, he felt a strange, sad yearning for the father who had died long before.

The next day Wenk asked Hull to procure for him a list of all the secret gambling-dens, the addresses of which might be obtained with the help of Cara, who was *au courant* of such matters. He made Hull promise, however, that he would not speak to the girl of himself in this connection.

Wenk visited these places evening by evening. He went disguised as a rich old gentleman from the provinces. He had chosen this disguise, first of all, because he had an excellent example of it in an elderly uncle whom he merely had to copy. The old gentleman gave the impression that he was thoroughly enjoying all his experiences of the great city.

Wenk had some accomplices among Karstens' acquaintances. He begged them to make it widely known that he, the "country cousin," was a man of fabulous wealth, which when once settled down, he intended to use to the full. He thought that thus he might entice the gambler from Schramm's and others bent on plunder, that his wealth would be the candle to these night moths. At times he played carelessly for half an hour, adapting himself to the character of the game; then he would win considerable sums, only to lose them again next time. With all this he never lost sight of his own affairs or his neighbours', and during the game his brain was working busily with a keenness which brought its own satisfaction.

One evening during the second week in which he was pursuing this course, he came to a gaming-house in the centre of the city which, from the style of its habitués, who appeared more downright than in some of the other places, seemed to promise him something out of the common. There he saw an old gentleman sitting at the card-table, his attention being drawn to him on account of his horn spectacles. These were of unusual size. The old gentleman was addressed as Professor. When he took his cards in his hand, he removed his horn spectacles, exchanging them for eyeglasses of an uncommon shape.

Then Wenk noticed that the spectacles now lying on the table were not the usual type of modern horn spectacles, but were of tortoiseshell, very artistically designed. The old gentleman slipped them into a large shagreen case, dotted over with green points. All his movements were very leisurely, so that Wenk had ample time for his observations. "Those are Chinese spectacles," he thought to himself, recalling his own journey to China, which he had made before the war. The recollection surged up so powerfully that he uttered aloud what he had really only intended to say to himself.

The Professor, who sat opposite him, nodded to him and said in a firm voice, which he had not expected to hear from so aged a mouth, "They are from Tsi-nan-fu!"

He repeated the name, stressing it and separating the syllables, "Tsi-nan-fu." It was as if the name had a rhythm and recollection behind it which affected him strongly, and which he enjoyed in the mere repetition of the syllables. He looked across at Wenk, as if his eyes in their large glasses were sending him a challenge. Wenk at once felt some strange connection with the old Professor.

"Tsi-nan-fu," said the harsh voice again, as if with special meaning; indeed, as if he wanted to hurl the three syllables at something, some invisible goal behind Wenk—to reach, three times over, an invisible point in the obscurity straight above his head beyond the circle of electric light.

Wenk involuntarily raised his hand to the back of his head and turned round. Was he seeking the spot towards which the three syllables were projected, and had they reached their goal? When he looked round he observed that behind his neighbour at the gaming-table sat the lady whose mysterious flight from Schramm's he had assisted.

It seemed as if she were regarding him mockingly, and he did not know what course to pursue with regard to her, but at that moment he felt that cards were being dealt to him, and he turned again to the table to take them up. As he did so he began to feel sleepy, and felt dimly that the staring eyes of the Professor were somehow responsible for this. He forgot the beautiful unknown, and strove to banish his lassitude, sitting bolt upright and gazing at the green shagreen cover of the Chinese spectacle-case. It seemed as if the eyes of the old Professor, larger than ever behind his glasses, were fixed vaguely upon him, and some dim recollection of past days of travel flitted into his mind. One morning on his journey to China, through the porthole of his cabin he had seen a narrow strip of coastline between sky and sea, and knew it for the delta of the Yang-tse-kiang. Yes, it *was* the Yang-tse-kiang.

Pursuing this recollection, Wenk named his stake, won it, and left his money lying. A comfortable sense of drowsiness pervaded him, and he stretched himself out, enjoying it. Then he became wide awake once more, played his game, and continued his watch. The players were holding the bank in turns, and it seemed to Wenk as if he were only awaiting the moment when the old gentleman should take it over. "Why am I waiting for that?" he asked himself. "How strange it is that I should be. There are feelings that one cannot trace to their source."

He finally decided that he was awaiting that moment because the Professor with the Chinese spectacles was the most interesting person present, and that this waiting sprang from a feeling of *rapport* and sympathy with him.

As the evening proceeded, this secret bond between him and the unknown Professor grew stronger still. "It is childish and sentimental," he told himself; "what is it going to lead to?"

Then the old gentleman took the bank, and Wenk seemed to be released—released from a ridiculous and unnatural tension. "Now things will be all right," he thought. He staked a small sum, trying to indicate thereby that he was no opponent of the banker, and that it was only for form's sake he played against him. . . . He won, for he held eight points, and then he ascertained that he had staked a much bigger note than he had intended to. Therefore he put his stake and his winnings together and ventured both. He drew a king and a five. When he held a five he never bought another card, and this rule was so firmly established in his mind that when asked to say Yes or No, he did not even answer.

"You are taking a card?" were the words he heard in his fit of abstraction. They were uttered by a deep, compelling voice, and seemed almost threatening in tone. Strangely, too, they seemed to him to proceed from the spot behind and above him which had been the goal of the sounds "Tsi-nan-fu."

Then he whispered hesitatingly, "Please!" and at the same instant he seemed to dissociate himself inwardly from this decision, but it was too late. He had drawn a five, and that, added to

the cards he held, totalled more than twenty-one and made his hand worthless.

The banker's hand showed a queen and a four, and as he had taken no other card, he had won the round.

"The country cousin is losing!" said a woman's voice.

The hasty ejaculation astonished Wenk. He turned round again, trying to penetrate the obscurity; then he grew uneasy, and at the same time he seemed to feel the beating of wings above his eyes. Yes, they were wings, and he himself was in a bird-cage. And now a seven was dealt him. "That's no good," something seemed to say to him, although it was almost certain to win. But Wenk resisted the suggestion, and said distinctly, "No other card for me!" It seemed as if it were almost death to him to have to utter these words. . . . He felt as if lightning-stabs were compelling him to close his eyes. Then in the last struggle of his will against his unnatural weariness he saw the Professor's hand resting on the cards. It pressed the upper one with a slight trembling movement, in evident desire of giving it him, and it seemed as if a secret and burning stream passed from this hand to him, seeking to *compel* him to take the card, although he had already declined it.

Recognizing this, he was suddenly wide awake. It seemed as if the chains destined to fetter his soul had fallen from before him, and he now faced the Professor fearlessly, seized with an incomprehensible and strangely earnest misgiving with regard to him. He was tempted to spring up and beat the beckoning fingers away from the card.

"You are taking a card?" said the deep, stern voice, as if issuing an order. It was the voice he had already heard from behind him. Then Wenk, in an unusually loud tone, said firmly and indignantly, "No, I have already declined!"

The large eyes behind the glasses remained fixed, gazing at him for the space of a second, then shrank back like hounds before a more powerful assailant. The old gentleman leaned slightly forward, asked for brandy and water, and shortly afterwards requested to be allowed to give up the bank and leave the game. He felt suddenly indisposed, he said. . . .

They all busied themselves with him, crowding round his seat, but Wenk remained in his chair. He was struck by the connection between his little experience and the old gentleman's attack of faintness. Were they indeed connected? He felt as if he were responsible for the Professor's collapse. It seemed as if he had subconsciously come into conflict with him, and that this fainting-fit was the result of their struggle. He was considering how he could help him. Then he felt in his waistcoat-pocket and brought out his little bottle of smelling-salts. He took the stopper out and handed it across, saying, "Perhaps these salts may be of use? I have just . . ." but he was surprised to find that the old gentleman had already departed.

His earlier misgivings returned. He rose quickly and pushed his way through the crowd. He wanted to follow the man and bring him back. Someone suddenly stopped him, saying something incomprehensible, as if he, Wenk, were responsible for the Professor's condition; but Wenk's hand went to the revolver in his breast-pocket. Cara Carozza advanced towards him; he pushed her hastily aside, dragging the other with him. Then with his disengaged hand he violently wrenched himself free of his assailant's grip, and hurried to the corridor which formed the dimly lighted side entrance. He heard footsteps behind him as he entered it, hastened forward, closed the door behind him after passing through, and soon gained the side street where the motor-cars were waiting.

By the light of a lantern he saw the old gentleman, bent and bowed no longer, but with hasty and powerful stride about to enter a car. He saw his own chauffeur drawing up to the kerb, and called to him in a low voice, "Follow that car!"

They flew after it. It was a large and powerful car, but as it was still early in the evening, there was a good deal of traffic, and it could not travel at its full speed, consequently they were close behind it. They were soon caught up in a stream of cars and taxicabs coming from one of the theatres, so that Wenk could follow quietly and without exciting suspicion right to the Palace Hotel. The Professor's car stopped in front of it, and before Wenk's car came to a standstill he saw the other enter the vestibule hastily. He gave a fleeting glance round. Wenk hastened after him, but happened to be caught in the stream of those entering, who hid him from sight. He saw the Professor rapidly open and read a telegram at the hotel bureau, and while he was reading it

Wenk had time to select a favourable spot for observing him. Thus he saw that the old gentleman, raising his eyes from his telegram, gave a furtive glance round, then went quickly to the lift, opened the door and disappeared within it; but Wenk had noticed that there was a lift attendant sitting inside.

He waited till the light signalled where the lift had stopped, and saw it was on the first floor; then he rang for it to descend.

"First floor!" said he to the boy, and they went up alone.

"Wasn't it the gentleman in No. 15 who just went up?" he asked.

"No, sir; it was the Dutch Professor in No. 10."

"Ah, then my eyes must have deceived me," he said. "Thank you;" and he proceeded slowly along the corridor. He came to No. 10, lingered a moment there, then went on and looked backward, hearing a door open. It might have been No. 10. He waited, stooping down and busying himself with his shoelace, and when he heard the door shut again, he turned round. Then he saw that on the mat in front of No. 10 there was a pair of shoes.

He went back, an unusual idea having occurred to him. He would knock at the door and ask the old gentleman whether he had recovered from his indisposition, and then take him unawares, for he felt he had enough to go upon to arrest him. The idea seemed to him both a bold and promising one, but when he stood in front of No. 10 again, he saw that the shoes outside the door were women's shoes, and he gave up the

thought. Then he went downstairs and asked to see the hotel manager. He showed him the necessary credentials and asked about the gentleman in No. 10. The hotel list was brought.

"No. 10, you see, sir, is Professor Grote, from The Hague."

"According to your book he is staying here alone."

"That is so, your honour."

"Is he always alone here, or now and then with a female companion?"

"I do not allow anything of that sort, your honour. We are very strict about our guests' respectability."

"Well, I can only say that this guest, in spite of his size, has uncommonly small feet."

"What does your honour mean by that?"

"He wears ladies' shoes."

"Ah now, sir, you are joking."

"Well, come with me, my good fellow, and see for yourself."

They went upstairs together. In front of No. 10 they saw a pair of elegant high-heeled shoes of the latest fashion.

Then Wenk cocked his revolver and went in without the formality of knocking. He entered the room quickly, the hotel manager following him. The light was on, but the room was empty. Both the windows were closed and the bathroom adjoining had none. Wenk searched the cupboards, bed, and drawers, but nowhere was any clue to be found. He hurried down to the street, but the stranger's car had disappeared.

He made the manager inquire who had left the hotel within the last ten minutes. "Nobody but the secretary," said the commissionaire. At that moment the secretary came from behind a partition, ready to leave the hotel. The man looked at him in amazement.

"You here again! You only left a few minutes ago."

"*I* did? I was in the bureau till this very minute," answered the employé.

Then Wenk knew all he needed to know, and the circumstance was fully explained. For the purposes of disguise the man who had disappeared had prepared the outfit of someone well known in the hotel. He had put a woman's shoes at his door, for he conjectured, and rightly too, that the pursuer, before he entered the room, would go back to the bureau and inquire about the mystery of the feminine footwear, and he had made good use of the time this took. It was evident to Wenk that he was dealing with a master-mind. He was astonished at the dexterity with which he worked. It immediately recalled the doings of the blond stranger at Schramm's, and Hull's Herr Balling.

On his homeward way, and after he reached his chambers, Wenk thought over all he knew about the bearded blond, and tried to compare it with the impressions made on him by the Professor. But, strangely enough, although many details concerning the gambler at Schramm's were firmly and indelibly fixed in his mind, his impressions of the Professor were wavering and indistinct, although he had encountered him but an hour before.

Moreover, he grew drowsy and it seemed to him as if he had to recover from some more than ordinary fatigue which he had undergone in the course of the day. He began to undress, and a lassitude, almost like that caused by the loss of blood, overcame him. That feeling of an inward lightness of body which had seemed so comfortable when he recalled it at the close of their contest, the nervous tension after the last occurrence, together with the sensation of faintness, now took possession of him entirely. He yielded to it and fell asleep before he had quite finished undressing. In his dream it seemed as if a mysterious and magic castle had been built up all round him, and he knew that if he could interpret the three syllables "Tsi-nan-fu," or locate that hole in the wall whither The Hague professor's voice projected them, he would find the key to unlock the door of the enchanted castle.

V

FOR the next few evenings Wenk did not visit any gaming-house. As his own chauffeur, dressed in leather cap and coat, he drove round the city, bringing his car to a standstill before one or other of its well-known resorts, and observing, from the security of the driver's seat, the people who entered or left it.

On one occasion, when he was driving to the first of these houses and proceeding slowly along the Dienerstrasse, he was held up by a block in the traffic. While he was waiting, he saw in a tobacconist's, just in front of which his course was arrested, something which caused his pulses to beat at double time. It was he, the sandy-bearded man ! He had his back turned and was buying cigars, but it was certainly he ! He was making his choice slowly and carefully as if he defied the danger of being recognized. There was a car in front of the door. Wenk examined it closely, but it was unfamiliar to him. He copied its number down.

Once the chauffeur left it, in order to do something to the back of the car. Wenk, who was behind him, called to him; the man looked up, but put his hands to his mouth as if to signify that he was dumb.

The man in the shop took up his parcel and turned to the door, but the face he disclosed to Wenk was one he had never seen before. People pushed between him and Wenk, so that he saw him for a moment only. Just then the block was released, the string of cars drove on, and the one in front of him set off at a bound, as if hastening to get away from pursuit.

Wenk, however, could not shake off his conviction. He followed. As soon as the other car was free of the rest, it increased its speed, and bore off to the Maximilianstrasse. Wenk was unable to keep up with it. The street was empty throughout its length, and when he had reached the square at the end he saw that the car in front was turning down Wiedenmeierstrasse. He still followed, the distance between them always increasing, but in the moonlight he never lost sight of his quarry throughout the length of the street. When he reached the Max Joseph Bridge, he saw that the car in front was making use of the wide square on the other bank of the Isar to make a detour, and suddenly, with its engines throbbing, it came back across the bridge and drove past him. It then drove again down the Wiedenmeierstrasse, which it had just ascended.

This was certainly a suspicious circumstance, and Wenk did all he could to gain upon the other car, and turned round while still on the bridge. Again the other turned into the Maximilianstrasse, and as it was now teeming with traffic, Wenk was able to bring his own vehicle close up.

The strange car came to a halt outside a theatre of varieties. Wenk sprang from his car, and when the stranger left his and, turning his back on Wenk, entered the theatre, he felt the same overpowering conviction that it really was the blond—it could be no other.

In feverish excitement Wenk pushed past the people and got into the theatre. He saw that he would overtake the stranger in the *foyer*, so he waited among the rest, certain that the other would have to pass by him. . . . But when he did, Wenk saw a broad, clean-shaven man, with a heavy mouth and large staring eyes. The face was quite unknown to him, and coolly and indifferently the large eyes glanced at him. Disappointed and disgusted, Wenk passed by, intending to go out to his waiting car.

A few late arrivals detained him in the proximity of the cloakroom. It was exactly eight o'clock, and the signal that the curtain was about to go up was already being given. At this moment Wenk realized what a difficulty there would be and what excitement would be created were he to arrest his man then and there. Unwilling to let his quarry escape him, he turned once more, and then saw the other disengaging himself from a group of men who were pushing forward to the pit, making his way quietly to the left-hand entrance to the boxes. This led to the five ground-floor boxes, as Wenk knew. He quickly made up his mind and bought a seat in one of them for himself. It was the last to be had, and the plan showed him that each box held five persons.

Going back to his car, he crept inside, and there changed into evening dress. From the box-office he telephoned his chauffeur to come for the car, and then returned to his box.

It was dark when he entered it, and he tried, but without success, to distinguish the stranger's features in the dim light. When the light went up again he was equally unsuccessful in tracing him anywhere among the twenty ladies and gentlemen sitting in the lower boxes. It was altogether incomprehensible. This corridor led to the five boxes only, and they were five or six feet above the pit. How had his quarry escaped him?

Now thoroughly uneasy, Wenk hastened to the street to see whether the stranger's car was still there. To his relief he found it there.

He breathed more freely, and turned to go to his own car and remain there until he could pursue the other, but as he noticed the strange car again, he saw that it had a taximeter. He had looked at the car well before, and was certain that it had no register. Without further reflection, Wenk approached the chauffeur, saying, " Are you disengaged? "

" Yes, sir," said the chauffeur.

Wenk entered the car, giving his own address. During the drive he intended to consider his next move ; then it suddenly occurred to him that the man, who had been dumb when in the Dienerstrasse, answered instantly when spoken to here.

The automobile drove on ; a sweetish scent pervaded its interior, which affected Wenk's mucous membranes.

Something *was* wrong then ! " A little while ago he was dumb, now he can talk," reflected Wenk. " Before it was a private car ; now it is plying for hire like a taxicab. What is it that smells so strongly?" His nostrils and eyelids seemed to be on fire.

In order to decide what the odour was, Wenk drew one or two deep breaths. Then he tried to open the window, for he found the smell unbearable. What *did* it smell of? He raised his arm, but he saw that it would not rise to its full extent ; it did not obey his will. At the same moment it seemed as if a heavy block were pressing on his eyes. Then dread seized him in a fiery grasp. No longer capable of resistance, he began to bellow furiously, flung himself down and kicked with his foot at the handle of the door, but without being able to find it.

For some few seconds he lay on the floor of the car, with occasional gleams of consciousness. Then these were finally extinguished, and complete insensibility overtook him, while the car continued its mad race through the streets.

The chauffeur drove with the unconscious form of the drugged State Attorney throughout the darkness to Schleissheim. There he propped him up on a bench, and then drove back to Munich. In the Xenienstrasse he halted before a residence standing alone. Upon a brass plate might be read:

Dr. Mabuse.
Neurologist.

A man of massive build, covered by a fur coat, came rapidly out of the house and through the little front garden to the car. "He is lying in

the Schleissheim Park," said the chauffeur. "Here is the notebook you wanted."

"Did you remove the gas-flask from the car?"

"Yes, Doctor."

"Drive on!"

But at this moment a woman, closely muffled up, came out of the darkness and stepped towards the car. She held on to the door, murmuring beseechingly, "Dearest!"

Mabuse turned in annoyance. "What do you want? Are you begging?"

The woman answered him gently and sadly. "Yes, begging—for love!"

"You know my answer."

"But remember the past. Why should this be?" implored the voice.

Mabuse, in wrath, exclaimed, "The past is past. Your part is to obey. My orders are clear, and there is nothing between Yes and No. You have heard from George what my wishes are. Drive on, George!"

He was already in the car. The woman fell back to the garden railings, covered herself up again, and called after the retreating car, "But if I cannot stop loving you?"

Then a second car pulled up close beside her. A man sprang out and advanced towards her, saying threateningly, "What do you want here? Oh, oh! it's you, Cara! Well, have you spoken to the Doctor?"

She nodded despairingly.

"There's nothing to be done. His will is like a sledge-hammer, therefore don't oppose it. So long! I must go after him."

And Cara Carozza gathered her disguising garments about her and went away in grief, downcast and heavy-hearted, to sacrifice herself for him.

"Where are we?" inquired Mabuse through the speaking-tube.

"Past Landsberg!" answered George.

The plans in Mabuse's head succeeded one another as rapidly as the trees in a forest in which he wandered continually further. Ever more steeps to climb, more gulfs to cross! Were they really plans after all? Were they not dreams? he asked himself, suddenly checking the thoughts that were racing through his mind.

"Five million Swiss francs are now worth about twenty-five million lire, i.e. five million Italian five-lire pieces. Each of these weighs twenty grams. Five million, will that be enough? It's a good idea, for the gain on every five-lire piece which I buy at to-day's rate with Swiss francs is four francs; therefore the total gain will be four million Swiss francs. Against that the costs are thirty per cent. Good! Each one, I said, weighs twenty grams. Now, how many kilograms are there in five million times twenty grams? A hundred million grams? Why cannot I think out these simple calculations clearly? Am I afraid of anything?"

Yes, there again he found himself in another forest. "Am I afraid, really afraid? If I am, I shall come to grief. After all, who is Hull? Who is Wenk? What absurdity! *I* . . . afraid?"

He collected his ideas, and sent these thoughts packing.

"A hundred million grams make a hundred thousand kilograms. According to the district he is in, a smuggler can carry from ten to fifteen kilos every time. How many men am I employing in this work alone? The whole amount must be brought from Italy to the Southern Tyrol and thence to Switzerland within a month. The Austrian frontiers are easier, even if I have to employ twice the number. Spoerri reckoned the risk to be only three per cent., according to the police reports, as against ten per cent. by Lake Constance or the Ticino frontier, where the Customs officials, even in peace-time, used to regard everybody with suspicion."

Mabuse's imagination threatened to run away with him again. Should he not try to sleep?

"Where are we?" he called through the speaking-tube.

"At Buchloe!" was the reply.

The distance from Buchloe to Röthenbach was eighteen kilometres.

"That will take two hours," he reflected; then we shall do it comfortably. At 2 p.m. we must be at Schachen, and before that we meet Spoerri at Opfenbach and Pesch on the Lindau Hill. After that we shall be practically in Schachen, and there will be no chance of sleep."

But he could not regain control of himself. Wenk's attempt at pursuit oppressed him. In the Palace Hotel he had only had ten minutes' start of him.

He did not want to acknowledge it, even to himself. He began to reckon that to smuggle five million five-lire pieces from Italy and the Southern Tyrol through Vorarlberg to Switzerland would require two hundred and fifty people on each frontier. That was five hundred men for the smuggling alone. If he reckoned the buyers and the Bolzano collectors as well, it was really seven hundred. With their families he might consider that he was keeping, roughly, about four thousand people. That was a small township. A little town lay in his grasp, pledged to evil purposes, working in dark nights, stealing along mysterious byways, avoiding the revolvers of Customs officials, working stealthily, steadily, at his will. They had no thought either, but of him, the owner of the money, the employer and dictator, the possessor of all power and force. They ventured their lives for him, but he had never seen one of them. How would it be if he were to see and converse with them, appearing abruptly before them when they were in the midst of their enterprise? They would imagine themselves to be caught, until they should have realized that it was he, their master and employer, who stood amongst them.

Four thousand people ; it was a whole district. But in Citopomar it would be something very different when he traversed the virgin forests and had the Botocudos and all the other tribes directly under his thumb, and had left this insignificant beggarly little continent behind him ! There his word alone would be law. There, in Citopomar, the dream of his boyhood would be fulfilled—a dream which had already begun to be realized on that large and desolate island which lay cradled

in the ocean yonder. There he had owned men ; there wild Nature was his alone ; as a conqueror he had sailed the waters ; his blood and sinews governed men ; his will was imposed on Nature ; the palms of his planting yielded him a luxuriant growth of wealth—sheer gold. He could despise it because he did not need it, for there he was free, free as a king, a deity ! . . .

But the war had driven him out of his Paradise and sent him back to the despised continent of Europe. He could not endure life in these European countries. He felt as if he were confined in a pasture, eating grass like dumb, senseless cattle ate their predestined, accustomed grass. No, he could not live thus ! Therefore by undermining State organization he was preparing a State for himself, with laws which he alone made, with powers vested in himself over the souls and bodies of men. By means of his accomplices he was collecting the money wherewith to establish his empire in the primeval forests of Brazil, the Empire of Citopomar.

He was self-sufficing. What were men to him? He scattered them at will. Yonder, however, in the future, in Citopomar, there would be none who *could* oppose him.

By degrees, as these thoughts ran away with him, Mabuse fell asleep, his limbs reclining on the cushions and his phantasies soaring above all material things. For two long hours he slept, sunk in the darkness of his dreams.

Then it seemed as if a little hammer were striking his skull, always on the same spot. It was annoying, and it was unheard of. He had only two hours between Buchloe and Röthenbach in which to sleep. Who had dared to strike his head with this hammer?

All at once he was wide awake. The hammer was the whistle of the speaking-tube.

" Well? " called out Mabuse.

" There is a car behind us."

" What are its marks? "

" There is a grey patch on the right lamp."

" What is the time? "

" Half-past one."

" And where are we? "

" Two kilometres from Röthenbach."

" Pull up ! It is Spoerri."

The car stopped, and immediately its lights went out, and so did those of the car which followed. Then it drove close up and stopped. There was a cough heard.

" Come here ! " said Mabuse.

Someone came out of the darkness. Mabuse had drawn the revolver from his coat-pocket. The car-driver turned on a small electric lamp, and its gleam disclosed a man wrapped in a large cloak.

" Spoerri? "

" Yes, Doctor."

The pistol was returned to its place.

" Spoerri, wait here a quarter of an hour, or else drive to Schachen by another route. You must arrive shortly after me, between half-past one and two o'clock. I have decided on some great changes that I want to tell you of before we go to Switzerland. Anything else? "

" Everything is in order. I have another hundred kilos of cerium in the car."

" Good. Between half-past one and two o'clock ! "

They drove on. As their road approached the Austrian frontier, which was patrolled by officials, their lights were extinguished for a while, but in Schlachters they shone out again, and the village was soon left behind them.

Half-way to Lindau, where forest and hill meet, they stopped again.

" Anybody there? "

" No, Doctor."

" Not Pesch? "

" I don't see anybody."

Mabuse quitted the car impatiently.

" I will punish him for this. I *will* have my people punctual ! "

He waited on, and the minutes crept by. Mabuse slapped his thigh angrily. To keep him waiting ! That a smuggler should dare to do such a thing ! He was consumed with impatience, and felt as if his dignity were impeached. That a smuggler should keep him, the master, waiting !

Five minutes later a car, with faint lights, issued from the junction road and stopped on the highway.

" Pesch ! " exclaimed Mabuse.

A man turned from the open car.

" Yes, Doctor, here I am. It is Pesch."

" It is 1.45 a.m., and you were due at 1.35."

" Oh, a matter of ten minutes doesn't count. *I've* had to wait often enough ! " answered the voice in the darkness in a defiant tone.

" If I had a horsewhip here I'd cudgel you soundly. Ten minutes mean fifteen kilometres advance upon a pursuer, you fool! You are earning two thousand marks from me to-night."

The other answered boldly, "And with my help *you* are earning twenty thousand!"

"Five hundred thousand more likely, you blockhead," said Mabuse; "but that's nothing to do with you. The only question here is who is master and who servant."

"You are not my master," said the other.

"I am not? . . . you say so, do you?" he thundered. "Very well, you can get along home. I don't want you any more—never any more!"

He turned to his car and got in; then said hastily in a threatening tone, "If you feel inclined to send any anonymous information to the authorities, you'll remember that there is a fir-tree growing in the wood, and there's room for you to hang there like your colleague Haim. Drive on, George!"

The car started off again.

In the neighbourhood of Schachen, where stately houses with upper stories made cars appear less striking, they found a park gate open, and without any difficulty George found his way along the dark drive leading to the villa. The lights were extinguished.

While Mabuse and George were still standing on the doorstep Spoerri arrived.

When Mabuse opened the door and turned on the light, he saw that Spoerri was dressed as a monk.

"It is a mere accident," said Spoerri. "I had to go to Switzerland in a hurry, and down there in the Rhine valley a cowl is more useful

than even a genuine frontier pass. The last pass I had is in St. Gallen, and you know that I had to leave there hastily. But I had left the list of securities with Schaffer, and he brought them to me at Altstetten to-day. It is not safe to send such things by post nowadays."

When he said this they were sitting in a large, well-furnished dining-room. George served the supper, brought ready prepared from Munich, and warmed up on the electric stove. Still eating, Mabuse said:

"We will liquidate on the lake itself, and thus we shall gain five points more than on land, according to the lists. I have bought five million Italian five-lire pieces. They are coming to the Southern Tyrol, and must be taken to Switzerland by way of the Vorarlberg. You must look after that, Spoerri. The Italian agent is Dalbelli, in Meran. You must go there to-morrow. I give you a month to do it in, and then we shall start a fresh district. Switzerland is now strongly against the importation of silver, and so there is less competition. We shall get enough of the five-lire pieces in Italy, and I have tried to do it with French silver too, but since the Treaty of Versailles there are so many fresh business combines in France, and they give nobody anything because the majority of them have not been in trade before. Have you not noticed that?"

Spoerri nodded, making some inward calculation.

"Stop your calculations till I have done talking," said Mabuse sharply, and Spoerri looked up in confusion.

Mabuse continued : "My confidential agent in the Government has informed me that meat-control will be abolished in Bavaria next month, but the matter will be kept dark. The difference in the prices prevailing in Bavaria and in Würtemberg is an enormous one, and for the first few weeks of decontrol it will still be very considerable. It would be a good thing to begin buying up now, however, and you can say that I am prepared to lay out ten million marks. Buy as much as you can get hold of ; haste is wisdom in this respect. Inquire of Meggers in Stuttgart about the sales, and see that we have enough people for the transport. Everything must be completed within three days of giving the orders. We shall want from a thousand to twelve hundred head of cattle, and look out for beasts of good quality. No sheep or pigs—the risk is too great. Reckon it up for yourself before you do anything further. We get thirty per cent. on our purchase, and therefore we can allow ten per cent. on expenses. You must reckon more correctly than you did about the salvarsan."

"That time I hadn't calculated. . . ."

"Exactly, you hadn't calculated correctly. Pesch is withdrawing ; let him be closely watched by the Removal Committee, for he is impulsive, and if he plays the slightest trick he can be strung up beside Haim. By the way, they haven't found *him* yet. . . . How much did you pay for the cerium?"

"It was dearer than . . ."

"Everything always is dearer than . . . the Poles or the Bolsheviks can get it. How much?"

"Fifty marks."

"Fifty Swiss francs then. They must have it, so don't yield a stiver !"

He whistled into the speaking-tube under the table.

"George there?" he called out. Everything in order? . . . Good. The *Rhine* is waiting, Spoerri. George, you are to be pilot ; don't forget the securities. That's all for the present" ; and turning again to Spoerri, "You'll be in no danger in going to Zürich, Spoerri, will you?"

"I am all right as soon as I've passed the Customs, and then I go on as a priest."

"If you travel by the *Rhine*, you'll avoid the Customs ; you can take charge of the securities and put them in the bank, to the account of Salbaz de Marte, mining engineer. Here is the list : a million in German Luxemburg stock, two million German Colonial Loan, five hundred thousand-mark notes. These are to be changed at once into milreis ; that gives a better exchange than either dollars or Swiss francs. Inform Dr. Ebenhügel that fresh securities have been deposited, and that I want him to make use of the first favourable opportunity and sell for milreis. . . . There is one rather difficult matter to settle : the disposal of the people who have been working for me in Constance. If they are unemployed . . ."

"Many don't want to work any longer, in any case," said Spoerri.

"I know. Those are the folks who have all they want ; there's nothing to fear from *them*. With my help they have got their own houses and are free of debt. But sometimes I have been obliged to take any workers I could get, and those who don't own their houses should be carefully watched. The powder magazine is at Constance, for the young fellows live there, and if we suddenly withdraw these high wages from them, there is nothing for them to do but steal, and in a week's time they'll find themselves in prison and will be blabbing everything in their rage. Talk to George about this, and see what is to be done. He's going there to-morrow. The safest thing would be to pack them off into the Foreign Legion. Go and see Magnard as soon as you have finished up in Zürich and Meran. Don't forget to claim the commission for them. Give it to George, who can divide it among those concerned. . . . Authorize Böhm to sell the three motor-boats that we have on the lake besides the *Rhine*. *That* always bears the ensign of the Royal Würtemberg Yacht Club and therefore is unnoticed. Keep the *Rhine* in this neighbourhood for any emergency. The boat can do sixty kilometres if it is well handled. Let us go."

George was waiting outside. The three men felt their way through the darkness to the landing-stage, where they could hear the boat's engines throbbing.

"You have followed out my orders and there's nothing on board?" said Mabuse.

"Nothing but the cerium."

"Take it out then. I am not a dealer in scrap-iron!"

George hastened forward. Three men were busy in the gloom. Then Mabuse and Spoerri went on board and the boat started, going cautiously

through the night. The engine scarcely throbbed. There was a slight vibration in the cabin where Mabuse sat, wrapped in his fur coat; then he went to the deck aft, and impatiently forward to the engine. After they had travelled for a while, he listened intently. It seemed to him as if through the sounds made by his own boat a noise reached his ears.

"Stop!" he cried suddenly.

George stopped the engine, and the sounds outside ceased. They started again, and immediately the sounds on the water, now on the right and again on the left, were heard once more. Mabuse went on the fore-deck, where the noise of the engine was not so distinct. From there he could hear them quite distinctly.

"We are pursued, or at any rate under surveillance," he thought. "Can it be that lawyer-detective Wenk?" Calmly, yet defiantly, he got his pistols ready. In the darkness he tried to discern what flag the *Rhine* was carrying, but it was impossible to find out.

"Spoerri," he called out softly, and Spoerri came out of the cabin. "What are we travelling as? Don't you hear that we are being followed?"

"No, no," said Spoerri, "we are a Swiss patrol-boat to-night. I heard that the Germans were about, so I ordered the three other boats to act as convoy. One is travelling behind us, the others on each side. Nobody could reach us; we are already in Swiss waters."

"How much a year do you earn in my service, that makes you take such care of me?" said Mabuse spitefully.

"Quite enough," answered Spoerri; "but that is not why I do it."

"Why then? Are you enamoured of my person, or is it merely the Christian charity that it suits you Swiss folk to assume since the war?"

"Yes," said Spoerri simply.

"I have three and a half millions here in my dispatch-case. If you dared to, you would strangle me, but you don't dare, and that is all there is about it. That is your pure humanity and love. During the last year you have had somewhere about eighty-five thousand, six hundred and seventy-seven marks or more from me. . . . Is that enough to stifle the desire to murder a man?"

"Yes," said Spoerri once more.

"Then you are a slave—my slave. Do you hear me? You are my slave."

"I hear you."

"Shall I slap your face? No; I won't touch your slave-skin with my own. I just spit in the air."

"Into the sea. You won't pick a quarrel with anybody. There is no point of honour on the Lake of Constance."

"Point of honour is an expression that doesn't exist. A point is no larger than a squashed fly, and that's the extent of a man's honour—yours too, eh? You have some honour, even if the Lake of Constance has not?"

"I have never measured it."

"Speak sense when you talk to me. I won't stand your tomfoolery."

"We are getting close to the shore."

"Are you shirking, fellow?"

"No."

"You dog!" said Mabuse in a stifled voice, in growing wrath. "I feel hatred tingling in my finger-tips. I shall grasp you by the throat, you cur, you cowardly cur, and I shall annihilate you just as the electric current in the American death-chair does, you miserable wretch!"

At this moment the engine stopped. For some time the sounds of the boats behind them had ceased.

"Why have we stopped?" asked Mabuse angrily. "I gave no orders."

"There is no signal from the shore."

Then Mabuse came to himself again. He stood up, gnashing his teeth, and asked:

"What is the matter?"

"We must wait. We can always rely on Solly. There is something wrong."

"Let us wait! Have you weapons ready?"

"Yes, but if we don't get the signal, we'd better get into the skiff. Then we can row back to the other boats."

Behind Romanshorn a searchlight began to play, throwing a beam of light into the sky. It moved lower and peered about through the darkness, probing closely and lingering in places, then was directed towards the waters in the middle of the lake. It rose in the sky once more and then fell pitilessly on the very spot where Mabuse's boat was lying. His knees trembled under the tension.

Suddenly, however, the shaft of light was fixed on a house standing out prominently in Romanshorn, just where the new church stood on a hill, and those in the boat perceived that the other craft must be far beyond on the other side of the point, and did not signify any danger. Their boat remained in darkness. In the railway-station on the shore lamps hung here and there at some distance from each other, and their reflections gleamed fitfully on the black waters. Then Mabuse said sternly :

" No, we'll stay here ! Tell George to get the pneumatic gun fastened to the engine."

Spoerri sprang to do his bidding.

Under the cushions there was a poison-gas installation. Mabuse opened the nozzle. The wind was from the south-west and therefore favourable to his purpose. He prepared masks for himself and his companions and tried their fastenings.

Then he saw on shore a light which shone out brightly and was at once extinguished, then came again and flickered and was still. The engine started again, and the boat was soon in the channel, gliding under the trees, where it finally came to a standstill. The engine was silent, and a man ashore threw out a cable. Then Mabuse heard someone say, " Dr. Ebenhügel."

" Yes," he ordered, " let him come on board."

A dim form stepped across the gangway.

" It is I, Ebenhügel, Doctor. I have just come from Zürich. It is on account of my car that Solly did not give the signal punctually. The Customs authorities are on the watch every night with their cars now. Did you get my wire? There is something wrong, for the clerk has sent a warning. He could not tell us what was up, but from some reply to one of his superiors he

gathered that it came to the Consulate quarters in Zürich from the Munich Crim Investigation Department.

" So," said Mabuse, closing his jaws firmly, " my lord Wenk is on the track, is he? Just you wait a while, my fine official ! " Then, turning to Ebenhügel, he continued, " I am constantly in danger, but I've never come to grief yet."

" I meant to say that this danger can only be averted in Munich. If anything goes wrong, they must not be able to put the responsibility on us here in Zürich."

Mabuse answered roughly, " What do you mean by that? "

" This affair is of great importance for several people."

" For whom then? "

" For myself, for example ! "

Mabuse waved his hand with a threatening gesture of dismissal, while the other stood breathless.

" *I* have not been drinking," said Mabuse. " How came you to alter my plans for such a trifle? "

" I thought it was necessary to warn you. The post is being watched, and people are not reliable."

" Who is to convince me that *you* are reliable? You are one of the people too."

" Our common interests should convince you, Doctor. I merely meant to tell you that it is from Munich that the danger threatens. You would be safe in Switzerland. You have accumulated wealth which allows you to live wherever you like. Stay here ; you will be safe among us."

" A lot *you* know about that ! Your business is to look after my investments, nothing else. You are but my manager. Enough on that head. Is there anything else to tell me? "

The lawyer described his latest financial operations to Mabuse, who took down the descriptions furnished him. Then he walked backwards and forwards alone on the foreshore for five minutes, to ease himself after his long sitting.

" Is Spoerri still there? " he asked. " Spoerri, you need not go to Zürich. Ebenhügel will take the portfolio with him. We will go back to Schachen together."

Upon the return journey Mabuse could not remain still in one place. He was constantly backwards and forwards on the small deck. The three convoys were again throbbing in their neighbourhood, their sounds drowned in the ghostly darkness. Suddenly Mabuse called through the speaking-tube to George, demanding brandy. Spoerri heard the order and shrank in terror.

In the half-hour which the passage took, Mabuse drank the bottle empty. He was drunk when they landed, and he staggered through the darkness towards the house in front of them, having issued orders that they were not to follow for five minutes.

" We want more drink," said he, when they were in the dining-room. " George, bring drinks ! "

George shuddered, for he knew that the more the doctor drank, the more violent and unreasonable he became. Spoerri himself was always obliged to drink till he lost his senses. They drank champagne and brandy mixed in equal parts.

" This is liquid gold," stuttered Mabuse th
" Here, George, bring bigger glasses ! Let's h
the goblets. Spoerri, take a draught. You foo
of a courier, drink ; drink it down, you dog. Down with it into your currish throat ! Now then, another ! Drink till you can't hold any more in that carcass of yours. I love to see you drink till you're sick ! "

Spoerri drank until everything swam round him and he lapsed into unconsciousness.

" And you, my lord Wenk ! A State Attorney in Munich ! Your notebook ! *Your* orders to the Criminal Investigation Department, forsooth ! Just wait a moment, my fine gentleman ! We'll begin with Herr Hull, for he was the first . . . (Drink, Spoerri, can't you, you miserable country bumpkin, drink ; drink as I do !) Let me see—Hull, yes, Edgar Hull, 34, Hubertusstrasse. Away with him, his turn first. George will look after it, and you can help him. The Carozza girl can contrive it. Find your accomplices. Write it down, it is the order of the . . . Prince. (Drink it down, now !) Of the Prince, have you written that? Which prince, do you say? The Prince, the Emperor of Citopomar, in Southern Brazil. A word from his mouth and a thousand women lie bathed in their blood, five hundred men are reduced to impotence. One single word and a whole edifice totters ! Don't simper, you fool, or I'll dash your brains out with this goblet ! "

He flung the vessel down, shattering it in pieces, and with the fragments he threatened Spoerri.

" I . . . I am writing it," stammered Spoerri.

"A thousand women and five hundred men," shouted Mabuse.

"Doctor," said Spoerri hesitatingly, struggling with the intoxication overcoming his senses, "I did not hear; I do not know this Hull. What am *I* to do with him? 34, Hubertusstrasse. . . . Do you really mean *me*, Doctor?"

Then Mabuse all at once stood upright, intoxicated as he was. "Yes, you!" he thundered, and then gave Spoerri a heavy blow with his fist, full on his forehead, knocking him senseless to the floor. "I am going to bed, George," he shouted, overcome with rage. He left Spoerri lying where he was, and went out.

When he came into the dining-room again next morning, Spoerri was sitting there. Mabuse had breakfasted in bed.

"Show me your notes!" he ordered in a harsh voice. He ran through them quickly, found Hull's address traced in drunken characters, and returned the book to Spoerri. "That's all right," said he, and Spoerri fawned upon him like a cur watching to avoid a kick.

That attitude of his did Mabuse good; it soothed and reconciled him, and he became talkative. Spoerri was quietly delighted to find the master friendly towards him, to know that the dread will of this imperious man inclined him to be amiable, as if recognizing his devotion.

"Spoerri," said the Doctor, "I shall go to Constance with you. We mustn't let those young men do anything stupid!"

Spoerri brightened up. "Oh, when they once see you, Doctor, there'll be no trouble at all."

The two men remained all day long at the villa. Mabuse drank, but no longer compelled Spoerri to do so. By midday he was already intoxicated. Spoerri, tired out by the carousal of the previous night, watched over Mabuse devotedly. He tried many simple devices to persuade him to stop drinking, but Mabuse soon saw through them, and ordered full bottles to be brought and no tricks to be played. Alcohol was a necessity to him; it inflamed his wild and evil spirit, and in the phantasies of intoxication he found all his great ideas. There was no thwarting of his will from without, and when drunk he felt himself enclosed as in a castle of the *Arabian Nights*. Nobody could understand that to him alcohol was the bringer of magic, the stream which intensified life and gave him creative power. He bathed in it as he might do in the love of some fair woman, yielding himself to it wholly, bridging chasms, attempting new feats, working unrestrainedly and overcoming all obstacles. . . . He became a law unto himself, a world of which he was the sun.

"Spoerri, how do you like Europe?" he stuttered.

"Oh, very much, Doctor," answered Spoerri unreflectingly.

Then Mabuse broke out vehemently, "You shall *not* go to Citopomar, to my Empire! Europe is a filthy, lousy country, fit for none but grubs and earthworms. It is the home of parasites, of all creepy, crawly creatures, but when I am in Citopomar—CITOPOMAR . . . Spoerri, I shan't take you with me. I am going to sleep now, and will see you later."

He staggered out, and lying in his bedroom on his bed, fully dressed, he felt for a few moments as if he were himself the universe, beyond and above all bounds and limits, the power of his will surging over him as a stream of molten lava, bearing him with it towards the day when, in his distant kingdom, his power would be supreme over man and beast, and all Nature be subjugated to his impulses.

In the evening, when the twilight was descending, they drove to Constance. Mabuse was sober, silent and morose. His imagination was already busy and his nerves reacting to his stern resolves, as he thought of the crowds of young men in the town, which seemed but a mere speck on his horizon—men who had been working for him since the Armistice. From this very town he himself had made a new start when the war had driven him from his own vast plantations in the Solomon Isles back into the European vortex, and he could find nothing better to do than work for medical examinations and exchange his career in the Pacific for that of a doctor in a town of Southern Germany.

VI

WENK was awakened by a feeling of chilliness, which set him shivering. He pulled his cloak round him, under the impression that the coverlet had slipped off his bed, but he soon became aware of his error. He sat up, feeling giddy and at first unable to recall anything. He came slowly to himself and then he perceived where he was and saw the castle buildings gleaming through the darkness.

He rose hastily and moved away, but he was still dazed, and had to jump about to get any warmth into his body. What could the time be? He felt for his watch, but it was not there, and then he went hastily through his pockets. His purse was missing ; so, too, were his pocket-book and his official notebook. He had fallen into the hands of thieves. The strange thing was how it could have happened that he had escaped with his life?

Then sudden dread seized upon him. He held his head in his hands, setting his jaws firmly, striving to subdue his feeling of despair. His notebook was missing, and in this were to be found addresses, reports, information, data, plans of all kinds. . . . The very first thing he recalled about it was the opening page, on which the

Hull affair was fully set forth. . . . Wenk now hurried straight forward. If only he could recover his notebook! He rushed on till he was out of breath, then stopped and asked himself, "What shall I do? Go to the nearest railway-station? But what is the time? It may be one o'clock, it may be five. How am I to tell? And when would the first train start? It might mean waiting in front of a closed railway-station for four, even five hours!" Then he reflected that if he were to wake anybody in the castle he would have to submit to questioning. No; that would do no good. Should he make a fuss about it? It was clear that the chauffeur had acted in obedience to the blond stranger's orders. Had the latter really penetrated his disguise and laid his plans so cautiously and cleverly beforehand, or was it the usual thing that anyone who appeared in any way suspicious should at once be put to the test in this way? Could it be merely theft, and the book have been taken from him by accident? He realized that when he seated himself on the cushions he must have set the gas-current free, for there was no gas in the car when he got in. That had been arranged, then. No, it wasn't that way either. It was something both simpler and safer. The driver could open the gas valve from his seat. Of course that was the way of it.

Thinking thus, Wenk reached the high-road, only half-conscious of his resolve to proceed to Munich on foot. He went as fast as he could, but every now and then he had to stop and wait till a feeling of giddiness had passed. That must be the effect of the gas. What sort of gas could it be that operated so rapidly and yet did so little harm? His foes might just as easily have used a deadly gas, then they would have got rid of him altogether. Why did they use a stupefying gas merely? Was it meant for a warning to him?

Now, at any rate, his notebook was in their hands, and perhaps they wanted nothing more of him than that. It was but an attack on his little notebook. Whose names were to be found there? Karstens', for one . . . and an account of all the occurrences in the gaming-houses with the sandy-bearded man and the old Professor, and in the Palace Hotel likewise. All the places where gambling was carried on were noted there too. It was clearly only his notebook that they wanted, and that they had succeeded in getting, but the book he had lost had meant a good deal to him.

He went faster and faster by the sleeping houses, past the peaceful suburbs and into the quiet approaches of the town. The byways, in which traces of snow still lay, seemed like dragons creeping through the night, bent on spying in the ghostly light on those who went by, and Wenk shuddered at the thought. But when a tram-car drew near he felt more at ease. He soon recognized where he was and hastened to his own chambers. He was thoroughly exhausted when he reached home, threw himself fully dressed upon his bed and became unconscious once more, not awakening until the evening.

The first idea which occurred to him then was that henceforth his life was at stake. He accepted it calmly, for since he was combating evil, it was natural that it should be so. The conflict would be played out on the borderland between existence and annihilation, and for one moment he wondered whether it were worth while to go on. But only for a moment. He immediately told himself that there could be no question of hesitation here. Such men are like beasts escaped from a menagerie, and it was his task, his duty, the justification for his existence, to help to make them powerless for evil. There must be no fear of men, no fear of the body any more than he had had of the soul, since his mind had once succeeded in grasping the crisis through which his country was passing. Since he too had been a witness of its genesis, he must help to overcome its effects.

Yet one more thought. Was he a match for his opponent? Must he not fortify himself if he were henceforward to pit his life and strength in such a struggle? His adversary seemed to have the advantage of him, for he worked in the dark. Were his own hands strong enough to seize and hold the evil powers advancing upon him and to crush them? Had he the strength to fight the age, for his opponent was more than a cheat, a criminal—he was the whole spirit of the age, a spirit torn through the catastrophe of the war from the hellish depths where it was created, to fall upon the world and the homes of men. He realized that against such an opponent he must spread his nets more widely if he hoped to ensnare him. He must have an organization equal to the criminal's own. He must not, as hitherto, consider it sufficient to rely on his confederates, those

who were entirely of one mind with himse must seek his helpers in the enemy's camp.

At once he thought of the lady whose stra and questionable escape he had assisted. H drove quickly to Schramm's. Yes, there she was, but, as usual, a spectator merely. He sat down beside her.

" You are not playing, sir? " said she.

" No, your example has made watching more interesting than playing to me."

" Watching," laughed the lady lightly, " when carried on by a high legal official is not good . . . for the players ! "

Wenk had a slight suspicion that this was said with a double meaning, but whether mockingly or warningly he could not decide ; in any case, it was said to serve the purpose of some other, who possibly was sitting there at play. Perhaps they worked secretly in partnership.

He observed her closely, but she sat quietly idle. Her bright eyes roved in all directions. He said to her, feeling his way :

" You have yourself seen a high legal official caught in the toils of the gaming-devil. His jurisdiction is troublesome to the other player ! "

He said " the *other*," and waited to see whether she would start, or twitch nervously, or give the player some sign or other. But she did none of these things, merely remained still and accepted his words with a friendly smile.

" She is a beautiful woman," he thought, " and there is some secret reserve strength in her. Men play for money, but it would be more worthy of their manhood to play for such a woman as this."

After a few moments she leaned towards him, saying lightly and with a playful impressiveness :

"I was present when Basch lost so heavily ! "

"I know you were," said Wenk, astonished and inquiringly.

"And you were playing then, too."

"Yes, I was playing. I have just confessed it ! "

"Ah, but I mean you were really playing *then* ! The first evening, when you came with Hull, you took part in the game, but you were not really playing. And the evening when the old Professor was there—well, I don't quite know, there was some sort of atmospheric disturbance . . . wasn't there now? " she said, turning to him with a melting and wholly feminine gesture of friendliness.

Wenk was taken aback. He replied :

"That evening when the old Professor was there? What old Professor? "

"The evening you came as a country cousin," she answered roguishly.

At last Wenk comprehended that she had recognized him, and his face showed his disappointment, but she begged him not to mind her having found him out.

"You were well disguised," she said, "but I could not believe that here in Munich there would be two such quaint little monkeys on a cherry-tree, conjured so cleverly by a Chinese jewel-cutter out of an amethyst. When I first saw the ring, flanked on each side by stupid diamonds on stupid fingers, I noticed it with pleasure."

Wenk looked at her, awaiting something more. Who could she be?

"At any rate, it struck me as curious that there

could be two men, even in such circles as —here she glanced round the table—" who some amount of taste. . . ."

"Your sarcasm," said Wenk, entering into he vein, "does not require either Yes or No, for the fact that you noticed my ring and so correctly guessed its origin proves that you belong to a very different circle from the one you find yourself in here."

"Oh, I was a stewardess on a steamer bound for Asiatic ports, but the war has taken both our ships and our calling from us ! "

"May I then hazard the suggestion that you have withdrawn from your former calling at some advantage to yourself? "

"Oh, I am not stupid ! " she smiled back.

"There is nothing which it is more unnecessary to assure me of, Countess."

There was a momentary flutter in the beautiful woman's eye, and an imperceptible something within her seemed to come to a standstill. Had he known who she was and wanted to play with her a little, and would he now blazon abroad the fact that she frequented such places secretly?

Wenk laughed aloud.

"Or can it be that the coroneted handkerchief comes from the trunk of some countess travelling to Asiatic ports, as Sherlock Holmes would argue? No, dear lady, we are quits. We shall both comport ourselves more circumspectly in future when we are among our fellow-mortals. I shall put a stupid diamond on my finger, and you will use a monogram without a coronet on your handkerchiefs, Countess. . . ."

"Hush!" she said, in agitation.

"But even such precautions would serve no turn!"

"I do not understand you."

"You force me to pay you compliments. I am seeking vainly for a suitable way of expressing myself so that I may convey to you my conviction that the 'countess' in you cannot anyhow be suppressed."

"He will be asking me to sup with him directly," she said to herself. "He evidently wants to start a romance," and the idea amused her. From sheer exuberance of energy she had come hither, seeking nothing in her masquerade but relief from boredom, and lo! she had landed a prize like this!

"At any rate, I need not have taken a circuitous route to Schramm's!" she said laughingly.

At the gaming-table nothing sensational was going on. She decided to feint with him, and said sarcastically:

"You try to disguise your compliments as well as you do yourself, Herr von Wenk. I am obliged to accept them, since they take me unawares."

"I merely mean," persisted Wenk, "that the removal of the coronet from your monogram cannot remove the stamp of nobility from your brow."

"I hope you are still masquerading!"

"As an enraptured reader of sentimental romances, you mean? In any case, dear lady . . . But is this quite the place to carry on a conversation which aims at a more serious turn?"

She answered, looking him up and down haughtily and deliberately: "Does that mean that you are inviting me to sup with you?"

"I would certainly not venture to do that," said Wenk hastily, recognizing her meaning. He saw that she suspected him of desiring to establish an intrigue, and that he would begin it in the ordinary way of a champagne supper. "Now," said he to himself, "if I am to win her over, I must act in such a way as not to deceive her and yet not fulfil her expectations, and since she thinks she has guessed me aright, I must not allow her a feeling of superiority over me. I do not want her to think me a blockhead. The coronet on the handkerchief seems genuine enough, and she does not come here for money, for she never plays. Therefore someone present, or an adventure of some sort, must account for her being here, and if I am to win her to my side I must prove myself stronger than the unknown attraction here," he argued.

"What have you to offer me?" she asked in a frivolous tone; but Wenk seemed to find something real behind the thoughtless manner, and he answered intuitively, fearing defeat as soon as the words had left his lips:

"I can offer you a great adventure, a really great adventure!"

"With you?" she rejoined, equally without pausing for reflection. "As a lover or as an agent of the State?"

"With me—as a detective!"

"*Can* you?" she asked disdainfully.

"Shall I give you proofs? Last night I was decoyed into a car and left in the freezing cold lying on a bench in the Schleissheim Park, stupefied by gas. To-day, but twenty-four hours later, I am aware that the man who did this, or ordered it to be done, is the same whom you saw playing recently as the old Professor, and that this same learned old fellow is also the sandy-bearded man to whom you saw Basch lose his money here."

"Is that true?" she asked in a serious tone.

"Absolutely."

"The man . . . with the reddish beard . . . who . . . sat . . . there?"

"The man who sat opposite Basch like a beast of prey!"

"And what am I . . . what have I to do with it?"

"To help me find this man, from whom others must be rescued."

"I can't help admiring him!"

"I do not minimize his powers, but there are powers which are evil in their influence."

"And yet more really human and greater than those that are called good!" she cried; and her bosom, slender and youthful as a girl's, swelled as she confronted Wenk.

"Ah, now I understand you, dear lady. Listen. Not more really human or greater, for power is power. One display of it cannot be measured by another; it is only its essence we can judge. Everything is human, the good as well as the bad. Evil forces only reap their advantage through the destruction of good ones, and this advantage is for the destroyer alone. The forces of good benefit all without yielding their possessor that

gross material gain which he who practises evil strives to attain. Which is the nobler? That is what you must ask yourself, and if there is an exuberance of energy in your temperament which you cannot make use of in the class of society to which you belong, and yet do not desire to keep inactive. . . . However, these people are beginning to notice our talk. I expect the blond has his spies everywhere. Allow me to take leave of you and request an opportunity of continuing this conversation."

"Come and see me to-morrow; come at tea-time please. Ask for Countess Told, at Tutzing."

She gave him her hand. Wenk, to whom her name supplied the clue to that mysterious flight when Count Told had entered the room, kissed her slender fingers, yielding himself momentarily to her charm and beauty, and toying with the foolish notion of abandoning his chase of criminals and yielding to the pursuit of this woman. With these thoughts in his mind, he said farewell.

Left to herself, the Countess reflected: "We women have no imagination. I was looking for an adventure among these gamblers absorbed in their play, and when it presented itself I imagined it was but an intrigue. But *this* is a man, indeed! He devotes his life to his task, and no man can give more than his life, and there is nothing greater or more beautiful than life. If only I had the chance of doing likewise!" She resolved to follow Wenk's leading and do all that she could to help him.

Among his letters next morning Wenk noticed a small registered parcel. He opened it, to find his watch and his purse with the money intact. The notebook alone was missing, and on a card these words were typed: "I am no ghoul. The things my subordinate took from you in error are returned herewith. I am keeping the notebook because its contents concern me.—BALLING."

Wenk was scarcely surprised. This man had thousands at stake; what were a few beggarly hundreds and a gold watch to him? He did not need this to convince him that it was really himself, and more particularly his notebook, that was concerned. He put away both watch and purse and let his thoughts linger on the alluring Countess.

In the afternoon he was received at her house, a mansion sumptuously arranged, but in a style that offended Wenk, for since yesterday his ideas of the Countess had made considerable advance, and it would have been pleasant to find himself more in sympathy with her tastes than this home of hers evidenced.

In the very entrance-hall the walls had been painted all over in Cubist forms and conventional designs tortured into weird shapes in endless succession, with splashes of colour here and there, as if to create an impression of the ardent temperament of the designer. "You are cold and passionless," said he to himself; "of so calculating and cold a nature that if one among you disappears, the others have not enough red blood in their veins to notice his absence?"

The butler, the dark severity of whose livery was lightened by small silver buttons and blue lappets, took his hat and coat from him and announced him to the Countess, who was sitting at the tea-table.

"We shall not be alone long," she said; "my husband will be home at five o'clock."

But the decorations of the house had made Wenk feel unsympathetic, and before he answered he cast a hasty glance at the walls of the room. The Countess noticed it.

"That is all my husband's doing," she said. "To me it appears simply hideous. What are you to make out of it, if one paints a peasant, indicates some freshly painted barns, and then tells the beholder that it is a symphony of Beethoven's? However, every one to his taste—or are you perhaps a 'Futurist' also?"

"I cannot say that," said Wenk, "but you seem to imply that they are the only moderns. Yet all men in secret speak the same language. Our freedom to express ourselves comes only from individuality!"

"You want to be free?" said the lady. "Are you not your own salvation? Does not your calling, your expenditure of energy, give you your inner freedom? There is no salvation from without!"

"That is quite true" said Wenk simply; and the womanly image which had haunted him since yesterday, and which seemed to be lost on entering this house, once more returned to his mind. "It is really what we were talking of yesterday, this balance of the forces of good and evil, and I wanted to talk to you about that again to-day."

"I understood you aright," answered the Countess. "I will confess to you that at first I thought you were on the search for an intrigue, and the idea amused me considerably, for God knows I seek something very different in the gaming-houses."

"You will find what you are seeking in my work, Countess," rejoined Wenk quickly.

Suddenly the butler, in his black livery, with its blue lappets and silver buttons, appeared noiselessly, and bent down whispering something to his mistress.

"My husband!" said the Countess to Wenk, fixing a steady and lingering glance on him, and as the Count came forward she introduced the two men.

Count Told was an extremely thin man, and gave an impression of excessive sprightliness. He was surprisingly young and very fashionably dressed. He gesticulated a good deal, and the movement of his hands gave prominence to a ring he wore, set with an unusual gem, such as Wenk had never before seen.

It might have been a flame topaz, with streaks of blood-red across it, trailing off into milky whiteness at the edges and emphasizing the clear honey colour of the transparent stone. In the middle of it, just where its lightning rays were most dazzling, was a tiny pearl, an islet, hardly larger than a freckle, but of a blue that put the sapphire into the shade, and . . .

Thus Wenk was thinking to himself, unable to keep his eyes from the jewel.

"It is a trifle too big for my hand," said the Count, answering his visitor's unspoken thoughts, "but the stone is so . . . how shall I describe its originality? Well, I can only say that it is like a recital by Endivian, whom you doubtless know, and it was he who gave it to me. He brought it back from Penderappimur."

"Is he the fashionable jeweller nowadays?" asked Wenk, who seemed somewhat at sea.

"Herr von Wenk," said the Countess gravely, "Endivian is the fashionable young Goethe of this season." Then she laughed. "No! Endivian the poet received the jewel at the Court of Artimerxes II, instead of the goblet, from the poem of his spiritual father . . . you know it, 'Give me no golden chain' . . . and when he returned, he announced in Germany, much as the Pope announces the Golden Rose, that his greatest admirer should have it. The choice fell upon my husband. It would have been better if he had given it me."

"Why don't you enthuse about him as I do?" asked the Count, with a pleasant smile, looking at her very tenderly as he spoke.

"Peter Resch dedicated his rubbish to him, and that was enough for me," was the Countess's laughing retort.

"Pooh, Peter Resch, indeed!" said the Count. "He is one of the Impressionists who has arrived. By the way, dearest, I have got something new."

"From the Jennifer gallery?"

"Can one get a real picture anywhere else? There is nothing left. . . . And one has a clear and incontestable and direct impression. If the artistic temperament would only renounce colour . . . it would be the beginning of really abstract thought, of the detachment from everything which needs the help of another consciousness to interpret its vision."

The Countess replied, with apparent earnestness : "Thank Heaven, we do get a little further. If in the realm of music, too, genius had any prospect of renouncing the crash of sound when it desires to express itself, the world would soon be attaining its aim."

The Count went on enthusiastically : "A sublime atmosphere of space . . . in two blues . . . which project into the cosmogony and play upon each other between storm and lightning. . . .

"Whereupon the Almighty leaves His seat, dear Herr von Wenk, saying, 'My creation has surpassed Me ; I take My leave ! '"

The conversation continued in this tone for awhile, and an hour later Wenk took his leave. He felt depressed as he drove home, but he had hardly sat down to dinner when a note was brought him, and he read :

DEAR HERR VON WENK,

I am sorry that our meeting to-day fell out differently from the one we had planned. That is not why I am writing to you, however, for we can continue our conversation in another place and at another time. But you may have left our house under the impression that my husband was "nothing but a fool," and in his wife's eyes too, and that would have been my fault, so I want to entreat you not to allow yourself to take up a depreciatory attitude. It is true that the Count buys Futurist pictures, but that must be understood more or less symbolically. I have always found that the more "foolish" a man appeared at one's first encounter with him, the more approachable he became when one met him in his more serious moments.

Au revoir . . . but when, and where ?

Yours sincerely,
LUCY TOLD.

"So Lucy is her name? And indeed she is rightly called Light. If she were *my* light of life ! . . . Oh, what a fool I am," said he, as he felt an unaccustomed warmth steal over him—a warmth for which he always yearned. . . . Then he stood up, shaking off these delicious tremors, and saying sternly to himself, "This is a pretty way to reach a criminal . . . through falling in love with a beautiful woman."

The telephone rang : "Hull speaking ! "

Hull told him that a new gaming-house had been opened, and he really must visit it. The saloon was not only arranged to accommodate a large number of people, at least a hundred, but it had certain mechanical contrivances which could turn it into a music-hall if the police were to appear. He did not know how it was done, but Cara had written to him about it and she was always *au courant* of any new sensation of this kind. They were going there, and taking Karstens with them, but Hull did not know the address of this place, and they would trust to Cara's guidance. Of course, she knew nothing about his writing to Wenk.

A rendezvous was arranged, and at ten o'clock Wenk drove to the Café Bastin, whence they were to set out.

VII

THE house they entered lay on the border of the inner city, in one of the mean, sordid streets leading to Schwabing. Its outward appearance, like its neighbours', showed an unimposing façade. It was one of those shops having lodgings above, and the sliding shutters over the shop were drawn to the ground. It was too dark to read the name, but Wenk noticed the number, that of his birth-year—'76.

They entered a dirty stairway in which hung a dusty globe, which gave an indifferent light to the changing population who inhabited such houses as these, and then ascended two flights of stairs. A heavy door opened before them, and in a corridor at the side a light shone out over the miserable staircase. The corridor ran alongside the staircase; it was completely empty: a cheap and shabby black and white drugget ran throughout its length, and its walls were covered with faded paper-hangings.

"This is lively," said Cara, "but just wait a moment!"

Then a small door opened from the corridor and a light streamed forth into the gloomy darkness. They looked upon a swelter of luxury. There was a little *foyer* with cushions and curtains, cloakroom accommodation, little restaurant tables,

etc. There was the odour of prepared foods and the popping of champagne corks. People they did not know were sitting there. The visitors laid aside hats and coats and went through into the restaurant.

Yes, there things looked different. On entry, the place recalled the promenade of a well-known Théâtre de Variétés in Paris. Through little peep-holes or from the boxes one could see a smooth surface gleaming with light. This was the gaming-table, and it was of immense size. In the middle there was a circular opening in which was placed a large revolving chair. It was the seat for the croupier. Around the table the places for the players were arranged like boxes. Every box—there were some single ones, some for two and some for four persons—lay shut off from the rest and in darkness, and all were furnished with comfortable seats. People could be entirely separated from each other by a curtain, and a grating, like those of the Parisian theatres, could be drawn at will. The players might gamble there as securely as if masked, and, without being recognized or even seen, could indulge their passion for the tables.

Two miniature rails led from each seat to the croupier, and upon these stood a little truck. This was to carry the stakes down and later bring the winnings back. The sum was made known by sliding numbers displayed on a board. The pressure of a button sent each vehicle to its destined spot.

On the dome above the table, in the circle formed by the boxes, were the *petits chevaux* in varied colours. The little brass horses had been carved by a Cubist, and painted in their various colours with highly glazed enamel. They were set in motion by a crank turned by the croupier. In the middle, beneath the horses, there hung a little searchlight which, lighted from below, reflected light upon the dome, and in this light they ran with the dome as a background. This was painted in the colours of the spectrum arranged alternately, so that there was always a dark horse against a light colour and a light one against a dark colour, followed by their shadows. This gave the effect of promiscuity which was intensified the faster they ran. The goal was formed by a thin strip of tiny electric lights let into the dome, and every box had an arrangement of mirrors by which its occupants could clearly recognize the winner.

Wenk and his companions took their places in a box for four, which seemed to have been reserved for them. Cara and Karstens sat in front, the two other men behind.

When the boxes were all filled, the croupier gathered his elegant evening dress about him, and slowly began to revolve in his seat, as if on a mechanical rotating disk, while he delivered the following oration :

" Ladies and gentlemen, this is the ' Go-ahead ' Institute. The ' Go-ahead ' has in itself the roots of vigour and success. We live in times of change, and our undertaking is designed to suit all comers. Here you can play alone, or as a pair, or in company. You can play alone, because you can have a box for one person only, like the charming

lady of whom I can see no more than the red heron's feathers in her coiffure. If you think that for good luck two heads are better than one, you can seclude yourself from your fellows like yonder elegant cavalier and his lady ; and if you choose to play in company you are equally invisible from my point of view. In the dome, ladies and gentlemen, you will find our game, the game of the house, I may venture to call it, although every other game is equally at your service. There you see the *petits chevaux* of the ' Go-ahead ' Institute. One of the first artists of our day, whose work you are constantly encountering in exhibitions and periodicals, has designed them for the ' Go-ahead,' and placed them here, and we have united art with technique, the strongest product of the age. The reflecting apparatus allows everyone from any place whatsoever to see at once and quite distinctly whether his horse is in at the finish. Allow me to demonstrate to you, by a mere turn of the handle, the very artistic and effective play and counterplay which is developing in the dome. There was once a man who had no shadow, but that cannot be said of our *petits chevaux*. Notice, I beseech you, the extremely artistic effect produced when substance and shadow thus unite in a piece of work which in its resourcefulness and originality does the greatest credit to the artist of our house. . . ."

He turned the crank, and horses and shadows chased each other with kaleidoscopic effect. It formed a pretty and a fanciful picture. Slowly the horses came to a standstill.

" I had staked on that one," exclaimed a woman's voice as the cream-coloured bay stopped beneath the goal, and in its head the eyes gleamed forth like stars. They were formed of small electric lamps.

The croupier said: "I will not detain you much longer from trying your luck, dear madam. I have only now to introduce to you the epoch-making novelty of the 'Go-ahead' Institute. What would you do, ladies and gentlemen" (here he raised his voice), "if the police were suddenly to intrude upon you and rob you of your money and your freedom on account of your forbidden game? You need have no anxiety on that score. We have hit upon an arrangement which might be called a *garde-police*. The 'Go-ahead' Institute may await the police quite calmly. They may be surrounded and inundated by the police. With a pressure of my little finger I can turn the whole police force of the city away from you and let them go ahead elsewhere. Look here!"

He raised his hand, then lowered it with affected impressiveness, pressing his forefinger down upon the black knob near him. A moment later the surface of the table was set in motion, and it began to sink. It moved rapidly and noiselessly, and the speaker sank down with it. The boxes remained stationary, but from the dome the little horses and the coloured circles descended—came past the boxes; the dome followed, and a few minutes later a quartette of nude twelve-year-old children were to be seen dancing, upon a new stage, to the strains of fiddles and harps, which began to resound from some invisible quarter. A body of men, dressed in the uniform of the city police, trooped into the boxes, exclaiming, "We were told they were gambling here! Where are the gamblers?"

Everybody in the boxes roared with laughter. The girls continued dancing, and the uniformed police threw off their disguise and appeared in evening dress, laughing. The floor began to move again, the girls still dancing, one of them making a gesture to a gentleman sitting alone, who sprang towards her, but failed to reach his vanishing charmer. The floor once more became the ceiling, the *petits chevaux* reappeared, and in the centre of the gaming-table sat the croupier once again.

"You see, ladies and gentlemen, we do give the police something for their pains—the nude girls! And if the case were really serious, they would soon have a scrap of clothing on. I have to announce that there is a change of programme every week. . . ." He continued for some time further in this way.

"This is only an ordinary cinema," said Wenk, turning to Karstens, and whispering, "the most ordinary kind of cinema. If the police were to come, they would discover the whole trick in ten minutes."

Karstens merely shrugged his shoulders.

Wenk wondered what the aim of such an establishment could be, for it was bound to be discovered and closed within a week's time, and the outlay must have been considerable.

Hull was much struck, having nothing with which to compare what he saw and heard there.

"Ravishing! enchanting!" said Cara from time to time. "We live in ingenious times, don't we? We must come here often, mustn't we, Eddie? Which are you going to stake on? I am choosing the black Arab. Black for me, please Eddie, because you are so fair!"

Karstens cast an amused glance at Wenk. A supper of the most varied and recherché dainties was provided. Things which seemed to have vanished in the depreciation of the German currency were seen—*pâté de foie gras*, fresh truffles, caviare, fieldfares. . . . In front of a pile of truffles and *foie gras*, inhaling its pleasant odour, Karstens said suddenly:

"Our mark to-day stands at seven in Switzerland, but it is seven centimes, and here things which we have forgotten we ever ordered are provided for us."

"Here a mark is worth less than seven centimes," said Wenk, downcast and depressed. Whither was it all tending? His heart yearned for help in his enterprise, and he had no appetite for dainties.

Cara trilled a popular ditty, and Hull, in spite of the influence which she exercised over him, and his enjoyment of unwonted dainties, began secretly to be somewhat ashamed. He resolved to send her a parting present on the morrow, and it should be the parure of Australian opals she so ardently desired, which a Russian princess, anxious to get on the stage by Cara's help, was willing to sell. "This should end it all," said Hull to himself. He was disenchanted, and yet at the same time melancholy. What would become of her? For himself, he almost thought he would prefer the cloister to . . .

Just then he savoured a delicious mouthful of truffle, and as he smacked his lips over it, Hull thought, "Well, there's something to be said for this sort of thing, after all. I should not get any more aspic . . . and I've not broken with her yet, anyhow! . . ."

Suddenly Wenk got up to go.

"Where are you off to?" cried Cara, excited in a moment.

Karstens turned to her at this instant, separating her from Wenk, who left the hall undisturbed. He took his overcoat quickly from the vestibule and was conducted downstairs. The concierge opened the door for him, looking first through the peep-hole into the street. Then he exclaimed in great excitement: "Sir, there is a policeman standing there!" He opened the door, however, and Wenk went out. The policeman saluted. Wenk saw the uniformed official smiling, and looking back, found the concierge smiling too. The "policeman" belonged to the "Go-ahead" Institute. If a real policeman were to enter the street, as the concierge hastily informed the departing guest, he would see that there was already someone on guard and move off.

Wenk soon reached the spot where he had ordered his chauffeur to wait. He was resolved to have this place closed, but he did not want the affair to get into the papers, and on his drive homeward he was considering how best to formulate the charge. If possible the place should not be described, but the cause should be given as that of disturbance of the peace, misleading of the public, swindling performances, or something of that kind. He worked the matter out fully, engaged in his conflict with the "Go-ahead" Institute, and while still in his car, in his character of prosecuting counsel, he conducted an indictment which through his skill and stratagem should eliminate this plague-spot from public life without folks perceiving what it actually was.

Before he slept, his thoughts, without any apparent connection to guide them, reverted to Hull, who stood suddenly revealed to him as typical of the young men of the age. Bound by a liaison with a vulgar, good-for-nothing girl, whose only talent was to exhibit herself on the stage; elegantly dressed, without being elegant; spending his restless evenings between gaming-houses, night-clubs, and the arms of a courtesan —this was Hull's life. Yet if he had taken the right turn he might have put his intelligence and all his available energies into administering an estate or pursuing a well-ordered peaceful life as an official of some kind; he might have been the head of a happy household and the father of legitimate children.

Many such men there were, strong in body and mind, living merely on their nerves, dedicating to a life of the senses powers which would have made them successful in the walk of life for which they were destined. Hull and his kind, feeble and enervated, represented the spirit of the age. What would the dawn of such a midnight yield?

Wenk went to the telephone and gave the address of the new gaming-house. The official whose duty it was to watch over Herr Hull was

to get in touch with him at once, but do no more than keep him in sight when he left the house.

In the middle of a deep sleep the telephone at Wenk's bedside began ringing. It was just two hours since he had returned home, and he was wide awake at once. "Wenk speaking!" said he, and he felt certain in some subconscious region of his mind, which was in tune with his last waking thoughts, that the news awaiting him on the telephone was in some dread, mysterious fashion concerned with Hull.

"Wenk speaking!" he called again, and his whole body was trembling with excitement.

"Here, sir; the police sergeant on duty."

"Be quick!" said Wenk, his imagination running riot. What was there to report?

The voice at the other end spoke hastily: "The gentleman named Edgar Hull, who was under police protection . . . has been murdered this night. In the open street, too, about 2 a.m. Another gentleman, name of Karstens, has been seriously wounded. The constable who was detailed to watch over him is also wounded, and both have been taken to the hospital. A lady who was with these gentlemen was arrested at the order of the wounded man. I have ordered the body to be left lying exactly as it was found until you have seen it yourself. The Service car is on its way to your honour. Please ring off!"

"Ring off!" echoed Wenk's voice agitatedly.

He hastened to dress, for the car was already to be heard throbbing outside. He went down the dark staircase, forgetting to turn a light on. Then, when he perceived the car in the street, his profile revealed the jaws drawn firmly together, in the necessity of meeting calmly the tragic circumstances in which he was involved, and entering into every detail of this deed of blood perpetrated in the darkness of the night, so that he might be enabled to act to the best advantage.

During the drive, something within him compelled him to take himself to task. "I had no business to tremble," he thought, "when this news reached me. I must be prepared to face even my own death unflinchingly. I must school myself further. I must develop all my tastes and interests and use them in the service of my life's goal; then only shall I be equal to my task. . . ."

Hull's body lay in the darkness. Four men in sombre clothing were silhouetted around him, and they stepped back as their chief descended from the car. Wenk ordered them—they were constables—to watch the entrances to the street and allow no one to approach the scene of the murder, which was in a gloomy street-turning behind the Wittelsbach Palace. Not a soul was to be seen in any of the houses.

One of the constables said that none of the public had been near the place since the occurrence.

It was now three o'clock in the morning. By the light of an electric torch Wenk gazed upon the corpse. There was a gaping wound from the neck down the back, and the body lay with

its face to the earth. Thus the police had found Hull when their colleague, blinded with pepper and bleeding from a wound, whistled for help. The body lay motionless, curled up like the gnarled root of a tree. The blood which had flowed from its wounds shone like black marble under the searching light. Wenk was convulsed with horror at the mental images he sought to overcome. He tried to photograph the details of the scene upon his memory, getting the exact position of the corpse. He wrote down the number of the house, tried to ascertain whether all the doors and windows in the neighbourhood were closed, whether any footprints could be seen, or any objects connected with the crime found in the immediate vicinity, but nothing was to be discovered. Its perpetrators had escaped into the palace grounds, one of the policemen had told him, and at one bound they had disappeared. Wenk examined the walls; there, too, there was nothing to be learnt.

He sent a constable to fetch a car to remove the body, and ordered that nobody was to come into the street on any account. Those who tried to force their way in should be arrested, but people were to be treated with politeness, he said. He then drove to the hospital where the wounded men were lying.

He found Karstens unconscious, and the doctor informed him that he had had a severe wound in the back from a narrow and apparently four-edged dagger, and a blow from some blunt object had probably been aimed at his head. The constable had not been so severely handled, and his were mainly flesh-wounds. His shoulder and upper arm were bandaged, but he could scarcely open his eyes even yet.

He related his story thus:

"Just before 2 a.m. the deceased, with a lady and another gentleman, came out of the house which had been pointed out to me. In front of it a constable was standing, and that seemed odd, for I thought to myself, 'Why is he standing there instead of being on his beat?' He stood there for at least an hour; then I thought I would speak to him, but he said roughly, 'What do *you* want? Go away,' and came threateningly towards me. I was just going to show him my number-plate when the door opened, and although it was dark I could recognize Herr von Hull. The constable pushed me away, and as I did not want to be noticed I moved aside, but I saw that Herr von Hull had a lady and gentleman with him. They went off quickly in the direction of the Ludwigstrasse, and the policeman and I were about three houses away in the other direction. Then he turned to the house again, saying to me, 'Now you had better be off!' I didn't bother any more about him, but followed, at some distance, the lady and the two gentlemen. They turned out of the Türkenstrasse into the Gabelsbergerstrasse and disappeared from my sight. I hurried after them, but could not see them anywhere. They could not have got any further than the Jägerstrasse. Suddenly I heard cries; they were shrill and then stifled. The war had taught me that that was how men in fear of death cry out. Before I could even see anybody

I whistled for help, and ran to the street as hard as I could, drawing my revolver.

"I hadn't gone far when I was suddenly seized from behind. My eyes smarted terribly, and I felt a thrust in my shoulder. I wanted to pull the trigger, but my revolver was no longer in my hand and my arm hung quite limp. Then I thought, 'I had better do as our major used to advise us—fall down and lie as if I were dead.' So I fell down and someone sat on me, and shoved something at me, holding my mouth. There may have been two of them; I can't tell, for I closed my eyes. They must have rushed at me from a doorway, and I was half insensible by that time. What happened after that I do not distinctly remember, but I heard footsteps running, and I was lifted up. It was another constable, and I quickly told him what had happened and he ran on into the street. Then a second one came running up. 'Police!' I shouted to him. 'Yes,' he called back; 'what is the matter?' 'Run round the corner, quick!' I told him.

"I forced myself to rise, and then found I was not so badly wounded after all, though I couldn't open my eyes. They had thrown pepper at them. I groped my way round the corner, but I could not see anything. It was the noise that guided me to the spot. I heard someone speaking, and a woman's voice answering. 'What is the matter?' I said, and a voice answered, 'He said we were to take the female into custody.' 'Who are you?' I asked the woman, and she answered, 'I am an actress, the friend of Herr Hull. What do you want with me?' I said, 'If the gentleman said so, arrest her!' She protested, and said she wanted to speak to Dr. Wenk, the State agent, at once, but the constable said she could do that later. Then she tried to run away, and there was a good deal of confusion and bother, and finally the constable had to handcuff her, she was so defiant, and I heard her call out 'George.' So I told them to arrest her, and I don't know what happened after that, for I fainted, and when I came to again I was in the ambulance. I am badly wounded. Will your honour please tell me the truth: am I going to die?"

Then the doctor laughed in his face.

"No, please, I want his honour to tell me. It's the doctor's job to tell people they are not going to die."

"But, my good Voss, how can you imagine you are going to die? You have some flesh-wounds and some nasty bumps, but a man like you doesn't die of those things!"

"Indeed, your honour, I have done my duty!" said the injured man. His voice began to falter; then the tension relaxed and he began to weep quietly and unrestrainedly. "I know . . . no more. . . . I have . . . done . . . my duty!" he stammered.

"You don't need to tell me that," said Wenk reassuringly. "He who stakes his life upon it certainly does his duty, for no one can offer anything he values more! But now, Voss, I want you to promise me something, and shake hands upon it. You won't tell anyone else what you have seen or gone through this night . . . and I beg the same

thing of you, doctor. A great deal depends upon it, for the public at large. I beg you to lay this very much to heart. It is not the pursuit of one crime, but of a generation of crime."

From the constable who had been first on the spot Wenk learnt that he had seen several figures near the wall of the park, but darkness prevented his counting their number, nor could he describe them. He was stopped by one of the gentlemen, who tried to stand up and then clutched hold of him, saying two or three times over, "Arrest the woman—arrest the woman."

"Then at last he fell back and let me go," went on the man. "Then I could run a few steps and I saw those figures close to the wall going round the park, but when I reached it, there was no one there. They must have had accomplices on the other side of the wall. I wanted to go after them, but I couldn't manage it; it was far too high to climb, so I came back to the spot."

"And the woman?" asked Wenk. "What about her?"

"I had the impression . . ."

"Now, Stamm, I don't want to hear your *impressions*—I only want to know what you saw with your eyes and heard with your ears. You will be scrupulously exact, won't you?"

"Yes, indeed, your honour. When I came back, one of our men was holding the woman fast. I said to him, 'Arrest her; the gentleman there said so. Arrest her at all costs! Hold her fast, don't let her escape!' We were all a bit excited, and she shouted out that she wanted to see

Herr von Wenk, and no one was going to arrest *her*. She made a good deal of resistance, sir, and finally we had to tie her hands. There were only two of us, and we had to help the wounded and our own colleague. We did not know in the least what had happened, for we had only just . . ."

"*We?* Tell me only what you yourself have seen."

"Then I began to try and find out what had happened. There was a man lying on the ground bathed in blood. He seemed to be dead, for he was quite still. The other was groaning. Then a third constable came up, and we sent him to telephone for the ambulance and make a report to the Criminal Division and let your honour know. That was what Voss had told us to do first of all."

"What was the woman doing all this time?"

"The second of our men took her to the guard-room."

"Don't go on with your story, Stamm, till I have spoken to him. What is his name? Keep yourself in readiness to report again ; do you hear? And remember, not a word of this outside the official circle—not even to your wife. Give me your word of honour !"

"Yes, indeed, sir. The other man's name is Wasserschmidt."

Wasserschmidt duly appeared.

"You arrested a woman to-night who was present when the two gentlemen were attacked," said Wenk. "Why did you do that?"

"I did it because constable Stamm said that one of the gentlemen, before he became insensible, called out to him to do so, and my colleague Voss gave me the order too."

At this moment the telephone rang in the bureau of the Criminal Investigation Department, where Wenk was conducting these inquiries.

"Who is speaking?" he asked.

"This is the night editor's office of the Central News Agency. We have just been informed of a murder. . . ."

"One moment, please," said Wenk angrily. "Who gave you that information?"

"I can tell you that without betraying any editorial secrets, for it was given anonymously, so to speak. Our night-bell rang, and as I went to the window I saw a man going away. When I opened it and asked what was the matter, he called out, 'Look in the letter-box !' Then I went down and found a letter in the box."

"Can you read me what was in the letter? The State agent for prosecutions is speaking !"

"Yes, certainly, sir, one moment. The letter runs : 'Edgar Hull, Esquire, was attacked and murdered in the Jägerstrasse in the early hours of this morning. The criminals have escaped. It appears to have been an act of revenge, for the murdered man frequented gambling circles.' That's all there is."

"Does anybody in the newspaper staff know about this letter?"

"No."

"Can you bring this letter to me yourself immediately? I will send a Service car for you."

"But, sir, that would be a very difficult matter.

I am alone here, and I must complete the Press matter."

"What is your name?"

"Grube."

"Well, Herr Grube, there's no difficulty in the matter, when I tell you very decidedly that your coming here is of the utmost importance, far and away more important than that to-morrow morning every Tom, Dick and Harry should be able to discuss such a piece of news while he eats his breakfast."

"But my duty is . . ." he began, but Wenk interrupted him.

"Don't take it ill that my time won't permit of my saying any more now, save that the police car is on its way to bring you here. The constable is furnished with the necessary authority. Arrange your Press matter so that the sheet can be printed without the information you have just given me about a murder. Au revoir, Herr Grube. Ring off, please."

Wenk sent off the car immediately.

"Well, now, Wasserschmidt, to continue. The lady offered resistance. How did she do that?"

"She ran a few paces from me towards the wall of the Wittelsbach Palace, to which the criminals had hurried, and then called out, 'George.'"

"You heard that yourself?"

"Yes, quite distinctly, and she pronounced the name 'Georsh.' And as she began to run towards the wall too, I did not wait any longer, but I tied her hands together."

"And what did she do then?"

"Then she became quieter, and let us take her away. As we were going, she said again, 'I shall certainly be able to speak to Herr von Wenk, shall I not?' 'Well, you will have to wait till after he has had his breakfast,' I said. 'Perhaps I could telephone to him?' but I said that wasn't very likely."

"And then later? Where is the lady now?"

"Still at the guard-room. She spoke quite calmly and said, 'You have made a very serious mistake, my good man; but I hope to be able to set you right with Herr Wenk, for, after all, you are only doing what you conceive to be your duty. I was with the gentleman who has been attacked, and the State Attorney was there too, but he went home a little earlier, or else he would have been in it as well.' 'Let us wait and see!'" was all I said to that."

"Did you happen to tell her *why* you had arrested her?"

"No, not a word."

"That's right. Wait in the next room."

Wenk interviewed others, and finally the assistant editor arrived. He protested loudly against this high-handed action of the authorities, and said that his newspaper . . .

"If it is the duty of your newspaper to serve its readers up the latest scandal, whether it be a murder or the unlucky ending of a love-affair, merely because it is a scandal, in as hasty and disconnected a fashion as it was reported to you . . . you would be right to protest. But you have no right to hinder the authorities whose duty it is to deal with infinitely more important matters so that you may satisfy fools with a thirst for gossip."

"But," stammered the editor, in an excited tone, "but you are trying to stifle the Press. We are not living under the old system, you know. The Republic will . . ."

"I have no time to bother about what the Republic will do. Be so good as to give me the letter you telephoned me about!"

"I am sorry," said the editor, with a confident and self-satisfied air. "These are Press secrets."

"Pardon my saying so, editor, but you really are very foolish. I respect any Press secrets which protect the interests of the community, but your refusal to give me this letter only injures them. Before I take it from you by force (an action which would lay you open to a penalty for resisting the law), I will tell you that this letter is the only piece of evidence we have at present of an unusually serious crime. Perhaps then you will become more reasonable, and not entrench yourself behind the plea of your professional duty, which, as I have already stated, I do recognize, though I place it far below the interests which I represent."

Grube felt uncertain how to act. Finally he brought out the document, saying, "I deliver it under protest, and . . ."

"Did you see anything of the man who brought it? Could you recognize him?"

"There was very little light on the street from my window. I could only see that he was well dressed, and he certainly wore an opera hat. A little while after he had disappeared from sight,

I heard a car drive off in the direction he took on leaving our office, and I imagine it was his."

"Herr Grube, you will be so kind as to leave this letter in my hands. You will be an important witness in one of the most notable criminal prosecutions of recent years. I beg you, upon your honour, to preserve absolute silence about this letter and everything connected with it."

Grube, under the spell of the horror which had seized upon him, now became more pliable, and grew as eager about the affair as he had previously been obdurate. He handed over the document, exclaiming, "There it is then! I am quite at your service. That is a very different matter!"

"My car will take you back to your office again. Please leave word that I am anxious to see the editor-in-chief as soon as he is able to attend upon me."

The assistant-editor withdrew.

VIII

WENK remained alone, inwardly cool. He had been able to suppress the horror and dread which the crime had excited in his sensitive and sympathetic soul. He knew the reason underlying this murder. It was not revenge, but something far more dangerous and deadly. It was terrorization ! That was revealed to him by the letter to the news agency, designed to give information about the murder other than the police reports. It was the terrorizing of all who felt themselves victims of that fair-bearded stranger who had appeared among them. How much this gambler must have at stake, he thought, that he could thus personally announce his crime, to give the affair the turn he wanted it to have ! How many people were in his pay that he was able to carry out his criminal deeds in this fashion? What sort of people were they, and what was the example such conduct would afford to those who were still hovering undecidedly between good and evil? How many adherents might not the announcement of this deed yet secure for him?

Hull had met his fate because he had revealed to the authorities, in the person of Wenk, the history of the I O U, and because the pseudo Herr Balling desired thus to give an example of

what would occur to those who stood in his way. Possibly, even probably, the attack had also been directed at himself, and he had only escaped because his indignation had driven him from the place.

Now perhaps it would be impossible, for strategical reasons, to close down the "Go-ahead" Institute. . . . Like so many similar places, it might serve as a trap.

"And what about Cara Carozza?" he said to himself. "Shall I be able to get her to confess for whom she was acting as a decoy? What can she confess, and whose name would she reveal? Even if a name and possibly an address be furnished me, do I know the man's secrets, and what precautions he has taken against me? No, I will not go to see this girl. I will leave her in custody and let her wait. . . . Then she will realize that there's trouble ahead of her. She is weak and vicious ; perhaps she will give in of her own accord."

Finally, however, Wenk decided otherwise. He would take the exactly opposite course. He would lull her suspicions by a friendly and sympathetic bearing. She was crafty, but she belonged to the theatrical world, and by his assumed friendliness and sympathy with her in the circumstances leading to her arrest he might make her more ready to confide in him. He therefore went at once to the guard-room, where he found her seated in a small compartment. Wenk hastened towards her.

"But, my dear young lady," he exclaimed, "how came you here? What have they been doing to you? They have just rung up to tell me what has happened. What a good thing you thought of me ! "

" Oh, Herr Wenk, you come as an angel of light to me in my dungeon. Let us get away from this place at once ! Don't lose an instant ! I am stifling here. I can't breathe in these horrible surroundings." She hastened towards the door.

" Ah, but now I must prepare you for a disappointment, which is unavoidable. You see, my dear young lady, we live under the State, and every State has supreme power. It appoints officials, each of whom carries on his own peculiar office, and they cannot encroach upon the domains of others. The State has appointed me one of its Attorneys, but I am only there to prosecute offenders, not to set innocent people free."

" Then what's to happen to me? " said Cara, suddenly hardening her attitude.

Her tone warned Wenk, and he came at once to the point :

" Your case does not come under my jurisdiction first of all, but that of the court of inquiry, and you are bound to undergo an examination there. It is troublesome, no doubt, but you must blame the circumstances for that."

" And what about your part in it? " asked the girl.

" Mine? I can do nothing but tell the examining counsel that we are old acquaintances, and that I do not think you capable of taking any part in such a crime."

" Then why did you come here? You are not the examining counsel."

Wenk realized then that she had seen through his ruse, and he knew, too, that she had escaped the snare, but at the same time he was convinced that she was guilty.

" I came here on account of a minor circumstance in which I can help you," he said quickly. " I understand that you resisted the constables? "

" What woman would allow herself to be attacked by coarse brutes of constables without resisting? "

" Yes, of course ; it was the circumstances which were to blame for your behaving unreflectingly and forcing them to do their duty."

" I am well known as an artiste. My name ought to have been enough for them ! "

" Did you give the constables your name? "

" Certainly I did, straight away ! "

" It is strange that they should not have told me that. They mentioned another name that you had called out ! "

Then Wenk observed that Cara threw a hasty and searching glance, full of hate, upon him. She looked away again at once, and drummed with her fingers on her knee.

" They said another name, did they? That's curious, for my own name is well enough known, and thought enough of. What might this other strange name have been? "

" The constable said it was George."

Her face showed no change when Wenk said that.

" He couldn't have heard properly, for my name, as you know, isn't George," she said, with an air of indifference.

"But a second constable says he heard you give the same name. It really *was* George!"

"How strange!" said Cara, after a pause for reflection. "My husband's name was George. Could I, in my excitement, have called . . ."

"Ah, now everything is perfectly clear. That is quite comprehensible, but, of course, nobody knew you had been married?"

"I *am* married!"

"You still are; oh, that's something different. Shall I send word to your husband? But perhaps you no longer hold any intercourse with him?"

"Indeed I do! His address is 234, Eschenheimerstrasse, Frankfurt-am-Main. . . . His name is George Strümpfli."

"This will be painful news for him. Are you not afraid that there may be some difficulty when he hears your name connected with the circumstance of Hull's murder?"

Then Cara spoke at last, falling back on her chair. "Hull murdered! . . ." she exclaimed, and she sank fainting from the chair to the ground.

For the moment Wenk was taken aback; then he decided that this fainting fit was assumed. He raised her on to the couch, then went away without attending to her further. Going out, he ordered the constables to keep a sharp eye on the lady, and not let anyone at all go into the ante-room. They were to keep their weapons fixed.

He drove back to the central police-station and informed the divisional surgeon, requesting him to drive to the guard-room, and to search the

girl's clothing without exciting suspicion. He then wrote out the order for her arrest, and handed it over. He gave orders at the Police Information Bureau that any journalist who came seeking for news was to be sent to him direct.

By this time it was daylight. Wenk had a bath and then drove to the office of the Central News Agency, the editor-in-chief of which had rung him up on the telephone.

When Wenk had told him all that had occurred, he said: "The reason that emboldened me to lay claim to some of your time, was this. If it were an isolated murder I would, although unwillingly, let the reporting of it proceed in the usual manner. But behind this assault we are confronted by a gang having at their head a man of apparently enormous and comprehensive powers. He must have secured to himself an organized set of followers whose only aim is to guard him while he carries out his crimes. The letter, which he himself may have handed into your office, discloses the fact that he desires the affair to be made known in the way that suits his ends. He means it as a warning. The victim himself told me not long ago that he had come across him in very peculiar circumstances, and this he knew. It is his aim to surround his dark deeds by a wall of dread; folks are to realize that no one who makes any attempt against *him* can escape with his life. You can readily see how great a danger such a man is; at a time when the war has left folks weak and emotional on the one hand and more readily incited to evil on the other. We cannot altogether suppress such an occurrence as this, but I desire that it should be announced apart from the connecting circumstances known to me, so that the imagination may not make popular heroes out of murderers. In this I am counting on the assistance of yourself and your colleagues. May I beg you most earnestly not to make known *anything* concerning the Hull affair which has not first been seen by me? We are living in an age of mental and spiritual epidemics, and those who would help to bring healing must be prepared to sacrifice themselves."

"I will certainly act as you desire," said the editor-in-chief.

"At the same time," Wenk went on, "I wouldn't on any account allow the impression to get about that such a course is due to more complete knowledge of the circumstances, or the exercise of authority on the part of the law, you understand."

"I quite follow you there," said the sympathetic editor.

"Then I am grateful to you, and can only hope for good results from our combined efforts. Our nation is in evil case."

When he got home Wenk was anxious to go to bed and enjoy a few hours of much-needed rest. It was already ten o'clock, but just then his chauffeur, who acted as his personal attendant, brought him a visiting-card bearing the name of Countess Told.

"I am quite disengaged," said Wenk immediately, and the Countess was ushered in.

"Is there any possibility of our being interrupted here by an anxious wife who is not *au*

courant of the matter which is engaging our attention?" she asked, as she gave Wenk her slender hand cordially.

"The happiness of possessing a partner for life has never been mine!" answered Wenk, feeling a delicious sweetness in the proximity of this woman. And yet she stood before him as something dreamlike, connected with a life which he seemed to have led not long before. Between this hour and that lay the mysterious occurrences of the night, and he was unable to conceive that these feelings of love and longing could be actually real.

She stood before him, and he found no word to say to her, while she herself, insensibly influenced by the man's force of character and lofty aims, felt embarrassed by this silence, because it seemed to be a confirmation of her own sensations. "Yes," she confessed to herself, "the feeling I have for him is . . .," but she would not utter the word "love." She blushed at the thought, a blush which Wenk saw. A tremor passed through him, and he struggled with himself as he bent low over her hand.

Then suddenly the vision of the murdered man rose before him, and he no longer felt bold enough to betray by word or gesture the infatuation which possessed him. He offered the Countess a chair, and while he fetched another for himself his imagination was fired by an idea which afforded a solution of the conflict waging within him. This woman, whom he loved and to whom he was evidently not wholly indifferent, should be associated with him in his undertaking, and their common endeavour might bring about their own harvest. Then he said to her seriously:

"During this last night an acquaintance known to both of us, Edgar von Hull, has been murdered. His friend Karstens is severely wounded, and I only escaped because I had happened to leave, two hours earlier, the locality into which we had been enticed. I believe I know the instigator of this crime. It is once more the sandy-bearded man and the old Professor. Its actual perpetrators have escaped, but we have made one arrest, of a person who is also known to you. I mean Çara Carozza, the dancer, whose liaison with Hull you are aware of. At present I have hardly more than a profound conviction that she has had some share in the crime, but I have thought of a way by which we might loosen her tongue. If you, Countess, would undertake the unpleasant enterprise of allowing yourself to be arrested, I would take care to arrange for your being put into the same cell as Carozza. She does not know you as Countess Told, but as a lady who frequents her own circles. Represent your offence as a very trifling one, and say that you will soon be set free, even if you are found guilty of taking part in an illicit game. . . . Promise to help her, perhaps by flight . . . and you must previously have informed her that her situation is a very serious one, and one never can tell what may happen to persons arrested in such circumstances as hers. . . . She will then probably tell you who would be able to arrange for her escape, and you understand the rest, Countess. Are you willing to play the part?"

"I will carry out your wishes," said the Countess, without stopping an instant for reflection, and her voice sounded eager.

Wenk was sensibly touched by the haste, the ready zeal with which this gracious and beautiful woman accepted his suggestion.

"Up to now," she said lightly, "there has never been a chance for me to do anything really useful, to engage in a bold enterprise with life at stake, to study life at first hand."

"And that is what you have been seeking in the gambling dens?" he asked.

"I do not rightly know. I felt at home in those places, because there seemed to be no barriers. In my own circle I could perceive the horizon everywhere, and I could not endure that. I feel I owe you much. . . ."

There was a smarting in Wenk's eyes. He was overcome with a sensation of longing; it took possession of him and tormented him, and he asked, almost roughly, "And your husband?"

She answered calmly, "In every marriage, although you cannot know it by experience, there is something of what the heart has sought left unfulfilled. I rob my husband of nothing, if I try to find what I am seeking without him."

"I honour and esteem you," cried Wenk, his voice trembling slightly.

"It is nothing but the natural law," she countered; "and now tell me what I am to do."

"On a certain day, which you shall appoint, I will take you in my car to the governor of the prison and we will arrange everything with him. When would it suit you?"

"Next Saturday at this time." She rose.

"The grey prison walls will begin to shine!" said Wenk.

"Because of such odd proceedings," laughed she.

"No, Countess, your beauty will light them up," and Wenk suddenly felt as if he loved her with a passion which must be shining in his eyes. He bent so low over her hand in adieu that he concealed his face from her, and she yielded it to him in a gracious gesture that was almost like the confession of a mutual understanding between them, then hastened away.

Out in the street the blood mounted to her cheeks, and half unconsciously she murmured the word she had suppressed, "love . . . love," while in Wenk's room there remained a scent of her which he eagerly inhaled. Then pressing both hands to his face, and indulging his secret and mysterious presentiments, he whispered ardently into the darkness that concealed his vision, "Death and love . . . death and love!"

In the course of the day the report of the murder ran through the city. It arose from the dark quarter where Hull had yielded up his useless and trivial existence. A dark patch remained there, and the pavement was coloured with the blood that had been shed. The thaw had made the gutters moist and muddy, and they had sucked in the dark evidences of the crime, till from a mere patch it became a monster, reaching from its own narrow corner to spread throughout the town. Folks came to seek its source, drinking in on the spot the full horrors of the deed. They saw the monster rear its head, rush towards them and through them, leaving disorder, abuse and dread in its wake. Like a dragon it wound itself through the alleys to the broad Ludwigstrasse, crept through the squares to the very heart of the city, and began to overflow all quarters, to escape from the streets to the houses. Like an underground drain it ran all day long, its gloomy current and dismal stench striking terror into men's hearts or drawing thence a force which could but find its outlet in evil.

Three days later a woman of the streets was murdered in the night, and the assassin was caught the very next day. He was an "out-of-work," one of those relics of war-time, who had fallen into a state approaching savagery. He confessed that he did not know what he was doing when he pressed his fingers deep into the girl's throat. Something seemed to seize upon him in the dark when he came round that corner by the Jägerstrasse, and drove him to do it.

The town was enveloped as in a misty fog, impressionable and passionate as the human heart, and the spring beyond it was obscured. The lights thrown on life became glaring, its shadows of a wild and overwhelming blackness. Men's hearts were torn in two, and everywhere there was internal conflict.

IX

AT four o'clock there was a telephone call from Frankfurt. "George Strümpfli, artist, was born in Basle in 1885, and lived at the address indicated from January 1st to December 10th last year. He has now gone abroad, his whereabouts being unknown. In the records he is entered as of Swiss nationality, and he is a married man."

From the register of the town inhabitants Wenk learnt that Cara Carozza was described as follows: "Maria Strümpfli, formerly Essert, known as Cara Carozza, dancer, born in Brunn, May 1, 1892, arrived in Munich from Copenhagen."

Wenk wondered how the pronunciation of "Georsh" instead of George could have arisen, for both these people were South Germans by speech, and "Georsh" was only heard in North Germany.

He went again to see the dancer, who was now in a prison cell.

"I don't want anything to do with you," she said in a harsh voice to Wenk. "You say you are going to help me, and yet you put me in prison."

"It was not I: that is a mistake on your part. It is the examining counsel, as I told you at once. I am only here to clear up one difficulty

in the case, and that is the name you called out. That is the point at issue."

"Indeed! you seem rather concerned about the verdict."

"Yes, of course we are. If you were prepared to help us we might get over the difficulty. Let me see, you said your husband's name was Carl . . . Carl Strümpfli, wasn't it?"

"In case you forget it again, his name is George."

"He is a Swiss?"

"You have evidently been inquiring about him."

"Certainly," said Wenk. "And so he is called George. Now tell me, although you may think it a foolish question, had you any special name for him?"

"No."

"You never called him anything but . . ."

"George. No, only George. When can I get away from here?"

"Ah, that depends upon the examining counsel."

"Well then, he ought to be here. It is shameful that a well-known artiste like me should . . ."

"You see, unfortunately everything must take its prescribed course. 'Without respect of individuals,' as the legal phrase runs. I cannot promise you any more than my own help."

"You are going away again? And without me?"

"For the moment I cannot do anything else."

The dancer turned away.

Wenk went to the scene of the crime. He had previously studied the list of those living in its vicinity, and especially those in the Finkenstrasse.

He took two plain-clothes policemen with him, one of them being the constable who had pursued the criminals as far as the park wall. They examined the wall by daylight ; it showed scratches from the tips of shoes, and on the top was a trace of blood. Possibly someone had been lifted up who grasped the top with his hands. In the clear February day the light fell pitilessly on that trace of the murdered Hull.

Wenk entered the houses, many of which, he perceived, led at the back to the park. He spoke to all their occupants separately. Some had heard a noise in the night, but they did not consider that anything unusual, and in the houses themselves, as they told Wenk, they had heard nothing.

He examined the park on the other side of the wall. There was nothing to be seen there beyond a trace of many footprints in one spot, where they had apparently jumped down, for some of the impressions were fairly deep. But this spot had been raked, and carbolic acid thrown upon it. There was an empty tin near, which from its smell had evidently contained carbolic. This precaution was doubtless taken in case the police hounds should be requisitioned, and it might have been put there beforehand, but he did not quite understand the reason, and decided to test it by means of a hound. It took up the scent in the Jägerstrasse, ran to the wall and jumped up on it, but when they lifted it on the other side it went no further. It turned away in disgust at the smell of the carbolic, ran up and down the wall and then back again, always in the same

direction, and yet always as if irresolute. It tried to spring into the air.

Wenk had it lifted over the wall again, but when the hound was on the top, and the man on the other side ready to receive it, it escaped from him and ran, barking furiously, along the top. It did not run far, but remained in one spot, barking, with its head downwards, towards the yard of one of the houses, trying to jump down there. Then with one spring the hound was over, running towards the house, where it stood still at the outer wall. This Wenk examined closely, perceiving marks of scratches occurring at regular intervals upwards. Here undoubtedly people had climbed up by means of a ladder, and the tracks led to a window on the first floor. The room it belonged to was empty, and he asked the people of the house how long it had been so. Then all the other lodgers were astonished, for they said it was occupied. One of them exclaimed, " But Georsh is living there ! "

Wenk's heart gave a sudden leap.

" Who? " he said quickly. " What was his name? "

Again the answer was " Georsh."

" Did you know him? " he asked of one woman.

" Certainly I knew Georsh ! " she replied.

" Was that his surname? "

" I don't know."

" Who used to call him that? "

" The fellows who were always coming to see him."

" So his name was George? " went on Wenk, desirous of being quite certain.

"No, he was called Georsh," answered one of them.

"Has he lived here long?"

Nobody knew exactly; some thought it was about a year, but he was hardly ever at home. He tried to get a description of the man, but then a curious fact came to light. Even about the colour of his hair they could not agree. One said he was blue-eyed, another declared his eyes were dark. He was rather tall and thin, and dressed like a sailor. Again, he looked rather like an athlete.

"What was he then? What was his calling?"

"They said he was a commercial traveller."

It was curious that there was no mention of this Georsh as an occupant of the house; he was not on the list given to Wenk.

Wenk went to the Town Register Office, and with the help of the officials he ascertained that one occupant of the house had been a George Hinrichsen from the Elbe district. He had left the place about a month before, and said he was going to Ravensburg, and after that the room had been taken by a commercial traveller named Poldringer.

It was quite clear to Wenk that Hinrichsen and Poldringer the traveller were one and the same person. It was just a month ago that Hull had had that memorable conversation with Wenk. And Hinrichsen and Poldringer were the same individual as the murderer of Hull, or at least the person who directed the murder, and it was his name that the dancer had called out. Possibly the direction Hinrichsen had taken in departure

also agreed with this, for Constance lay near Ravensburg, and Switzerland could be reached from there.

Wenk telegraphed to the Constance head-office, with special reference to the passport stations. A few hours later the police officials there telegraphed back that a man named Poldringer had notified his arrival there. He gave Bavaria as his native State, and this had struck the registering official as curious, because the man used a dialect that was unmistakably North German. On that account the police kept him under surveillance. They ascertained that he frequented the society of people who were suspected of smuggling goods across the Swiss frontier. He often travelled by the steamer to Lindau. "Expect me to-day in Constance," telephoned Wenk finally.

Wenk immediately prepared for a journey. He could reach Constance before night if the little monoplane belonging to a friend of his, which was always at his service, were ready for a flight. He telephoned to him and ascertained that it was.

At four o'clock he departed, and in the deepening twilight he descended at the Petershaus aerodrome near Constance. The police described the locality in which these profiteers and smugglers were to be found. He disguised himself as a chauffeur and went to one of their inns to get some supper. He addressed one man whom he thought to be of their party, saying that he could get hold of two cars, and also some sort of export licence, as long as it wasn't looked at too closely, but if he had the help of one or, better still, of two bold fellows it could be done quite easily.

There would be a profit of about ten thousand in it, for the cars were bought in the autumn of 1918 and had been kept hidden ever since. They were first-class cars that had belonged to two generals.

The other did not take long to consider. He would broach the matter to a friend of his, and the three of them would soon pull it off. They went together later to another tavern, which the friend often frequented, but he did not appear.

"What is his name?" asked Wenk. "Perhaps I know him."

"He is called Ball, but you may have known him under some other name. Most of us find it convenient to have one or two different names here ; you know all about that, don't you?"

"Of course I do," said Wenk.

Then he grew suddenly pale, for just then a men entered, in whom he thought he recognized the chauffeur who had driven him to Schleissheim in the car filled with poison gas. Everything was at stake. Wenk's disguise was rather a sketchy one. Supposing this man were the Ball they were expecting! If he came to their table and sat down, he would probably recognize Wenk, and the whole story would come out. He employed all his powers to regain his self-control, and tried to disguise his features by contracting his facial muscles. He had already taken the precaution of seating himself in a dark corner.

But the new-comer sat down at some distance from him at a large table where several young fellows were already sitting. He had his back to Wenk, but the lawyer felt he must not venture any further, and promising a rendezvous for the next evening, he hastily took his leave.

He went to the police-station, stated where he had been, and described the suspected man. The sergeant of police sent for a constable, who said that according to the description the man must be Poldringer.

"Could we be certain of that? I should like the fact established during the night. But I beg of you to proceed cautiously in the matter, for this man is armed at all points!" urged Wenk.

Then he thought it would be better not to go there, said the constable. It was but a small town, and all the police officials, even the plain clothes men, knew these profiteers. His sudden appearance might give the alarm.

"Well then, I must manage without that. Do you know where he lives?"

"Certainly."

"Then take me there at once."

The sergeant took Wenk to a byway where stood a shabby old inn, which was divided into many courtyards at the back. Wenk at once recognized that it would be extremely difficult to carry through any arrest here without a large body of police, and so many constables could not be quickly and easily procured in a small town like this.

Opposite the house was an iron-foundry. Here Wenk spent the next forenoon in company with a constable who knew Poldringer, the two concealing themselves behind a dust-begrimed window.

When, about eleven o'clock, the man whom Wenk knew as the sandy-bearded man's chauffeur came out of the house, the constable nudged him, saying, "That is Poldringer!"

"That's my man!" said Wenk.

In the afternoon he had a consultation with the head of the Criminal Investigation Department. Wenk said it was not a case of arresting one man, but of getting rid of the whole gang, for here in Constance, as one might say, there was but one division of the army whose general headquarters was in Munich, and until one could lay hold of the leader it was not worth while to secure a dozen or so of his accomplices. Wenk advised their not making use of the announcement of a reward of five thousand marks for information (which had been drawn up contrary to his wish), but rather that they should keep a close watch upon what they now knew to be one of the haunts of the gang. That would be the safest way of entrapping their leader, for if they seized the chauffeur now, his master would receive emphatic warning. And this man, Wenk told them, was undoubtedly one of the most daring criminals to be met with in the last ten years. It was not only a money reward, but fame, that might be looked for, and the constables all promised to do what they could.

In the evening Wenk met the young man who was going to help him get rid of the cars at a big profit. His friend had left the town, he said, for things had gone badly of late. Switzerland was overdone with German goods, and the German authorities seemed to be regaining their control of the Lake. They might soon be starving, he said. But *he* knew what to do. He wasn't going to starve, and sooner than be driven out of the place by hunger, he would join the Foreign Legion. Then at least he would be safe from the German authorities. He could fill his belly in peace, and if he were shot down it would be as a free man, whereas if he stayed here he was bound to end in quod.

Wenk asked what he had to do to get into the Foreign Legion.

"Oh, that's easier than ever it was," answered the man. "Before the war you had to go to Belfort, but now that's not necessary—you can join up here."

"Well, that's a good thing to know. What's the address of their headquarters?"

"Oh, you only need go to the 'Black Bull' and ask for Poldringer, or else come in the evening to the tavern we went to yesterday, for he was sitting there. He had got a lot of them at his table, and I told him I'd think it over. If our honk-honk business comes off, I shan't need to, though, but we can't get hold of that d——d Ball; he'd want to stand in with us, but I expect he's got something good on somewhere else. By the way, Poldringer was asking after you last night. You must belong to his part of the country, eh? He said he thought he knew you, but I told him you were from Basle and wanted to get two cars across, and he said, 'Oh, then it can't be the man from Munich,' but I thought to myself a man might have been in Munich and yet be in Basle now, eh, mate?"

"I've never been in Munich," said Wenk; "he must have mistaken me for someone else."

"Well, it's all the same thing, anyhow! We'll get those cars through, eh? By the way, can you stand me a trifle of ready on the job?"

"A fifty?" asked Wenk.

"Oh well, if it's not inconvenient, I'd like two fifties."

"One's all I can spare at the moment," said Wenk, pulling a fifty-mark note out of his waist-coat-pocket.

"You needn't be afraid of showing your purse, even if it has a hole in it," remarked the man.

"You wouldn't buy any more with fifty out of my purse than you can with that one!"

"Well, all right; no offence! Where are you staying?"

"In Barbarossa," said Wenk, at a venture.

"Oh, if the folks there get hold of you, you won't get out of their clutches, I can tell you! You go to the 'Black Bull.' They'll look after you properly there, and everything is arranged so that you can fly off as easily as these greenbacks will. Not a trace left behind!"

Next morning Wenk flew back to Munich. His trip had been successful, and the journey in the pure clean air, cold though it was in the upper regions, invigorated him. He felt as if he were gathering the threads together in his hand and they were about to form a vast and invisible net, and he, the fisherman, felt himself ready and able to drag it in.

An hour before Wenk took up his stand at the grimy window of the iron-foundry opposite

the "Black Bull," the following conversation was carried on between Constance and Munich:

"Hulloa, Dr. Dringer speaking. Who is there?"

"Hulloa, this is Dr. Mabuse. What is it, please?"

"The invalid seems to be staying here. I am not quite certain yet that it is he, but I thought I recognized him. I am anxious for instructions."

"That's very strange. He was in Munich to my certain knowledge just about four o'clock yesterday. What time did you think you saw him, Doctor?"

"At half-past seven!"

"But the express does not leave until 7 p.m. and only reaches Lindau at 11 p.m. Even if he had used a car he could not possibly have reached Constance by half-past seven!"

"It is possible that I may have been mistaken, but hardly likely. I can't at once abandon the idea that it was the lunatic we are searching for."

"Well, in any case, my dear colleague, prosecute your inquiries, and if you are convinced, use the safest means at your command."

"You mean the strait-waistcoat, Doctor?"

"Certainly, for you know he is dangerous to the community. Have you any other news? What about those neurotic patients?"

"They are quite ready to go to the sanatorium, and they start to-morrow."

"Good. That's all, thank you. My best wishes to you, Doctor."

Mabuse went up and down his room in considerable excitement. How could it be possible that the State Attorney, who was still in Munich at 4 p.m. should have been seen in Constance at 7.30 p.m.? Might not George be mistaken?

He dressed himself as a messenger and repaired to the Amandastrasse, where Wenk had his chambers. He rang his door-bell, and a servant opened to him.

"Can I see the State Attorney?" he asked.

"He is not at home. Give me the letter."

"I was to give it to him personally. . . . When will he be back?"

"I do not know."

"Has he gone away for long, or shall I be able to hand him the letter this afternoon?"

"His honour did not leave word."

"Ah, then I must rely on you," said the messenger. "You will be sure to deliver the letter, won't you?"

"Certainly, give it here," and the man glanced at the address, but it was directed to the State Attorney, Dr. Müller, and he said, "You are making a mistake. Herr von Wenk is the barrister who lives here."

"Good heavens, so they've given me the wrong number! I always say, 'Write it down, gentlemen.' And so I've made a mistake here. Where does the gentleman I want live?"

"I don't know him at all."

"Well, there's nothing for it but to go back! Good morning!"

The pseudo-messenger went off, knowing only half he wanted to know. On the way, enlightenment came to him. "Of course," he said to himself, "he must have gone by aeroplane, and I can guess why. . . ."

For an instant a mist swam before his eyes, so acutely did he feel this discovery of his. For the first time he measured his adversary's powers. No one had ever used such means against him before. George had not yet sent off the discharged smugglers. Were they the reason of this hasty visit to Constance? Had his—Mabuse's—band of watchers failed him? The matter became more difficult and dangerous every day, and recently several agents of the Foreign Legion had been discovered and arrested.

"If Wenk has the whole gang imprisoned," thought Mabuse, "one of them might blab enough to bring the inquiry home to me, and then for the first time I shall no longer be safe. I must have him got out of the way. . . . Why did George let him go, if he had even a suspicion that it might be the lawyer? A plague upon the soft-heartedness that allowed him to escape us at Schleissheim! My life is not safe until he is wiped out of existence! I shall have to prepare for flight, and I will be off to the Swiss frontier unless I know for certain by eight o'clock to-night whether George is arrested or not. Where did George see him? If I only knew that, for it all depends upon that! I am consumed with impatience, and my hatred of this destroyer of my peace is burning me like a fever. Supposing I never reach my kingdom of Citopomar!"

Then Mabuse went home again, carrying a parcel for himself under his arm. He must be prepared for all eventualities. Should his dwelling be already secretly watched by the police, he was a messenger who had something to deliver, and there were cigars in the parcel. But his chambers were empty, and there was nothing suspicious in the neighbourhood.

That evening he did not leave his house again. It was safer for him to see from the window who was coming to him than to find, on returning after absence, that someone had effected an entry and was watching at the window for him. He must be ready for anything that might happen !

He spent the evening in examining his finances. There was yet six months' work to be accomplished in Germany before he had the amount he had decided would be necessary. There he knew the ground well, and anywhere else it would take at least a year to accomplish the same result. The languages he was conversant with necessitated his being in countries where German and English were known. Six months ! The words throbbed in his brain, and the blood mounted to his heart. "I shall stay !" he said aloud in his lonely room, and it seemed as if the defiance these words awoke rang through him like the blow of the hammer on the anvil.

Next morning at half-past seven there was an urgent telephone call from Constance. "Doctor Dringer speaking ! I am sorry, but I fear I have misled my esteemed colleague. There is no further trace to be seen. Everything is in readiness for departure, and the other patients are prepared for their journey."

"It was a pity, Doctor. Ring up again this evening !"

"You swine !" Mabuse growled between his teeth at his window, looking in the direction of Wenk's chambers. "If it were only for this half-hour of uncertainty, you should pay for it with your life ! The first attempt failed through a mere accident. There shall be no accident the next time !"

Mabuse left his house on foot, went to one of the fashionable hotels, and asked for the general manager, Herr Hungerbühler. Yes, he was there, and would be found in Room 115, he was told.

When Mabuse entered the room unannounced, it was empty. "Spoerri !" he called softly, Then a cupboard door opened and Spoerri came out.

"Wenk seems to be in Constance. George has just telephoned to me. Look after the matter. How is Cara getting on in prison?"

"It would be safer if she were out of the way altogether. Dead men tell no tales !"

"No, I have already told you once, she is safer alive than dead," answered Mabuse quickly.

"In any case, I have got one of the warders under my control."

"Why?"

"To contrive her escape, if she's to be allowed to live !"

"Fool !" cried Mabuse angrily. "I tell you she is safer where she is. If they were to break open her mouth with a crowbar she would never say anything. Stop talking such d——d nonsense. She is to come out when I leave Europe, not before ! I came to tell you that I give you a month to get rid of Wenk. I make it so long, so that it may be safely undertaken. Make a note of the date, for he's not to live a day longer than that ! " and Mabuse went off, without a word of farewell.

X

NEXT evening Dr. Mabuse was invited to spend the evening at the house of Privy Councillor Wendel, who was interested in hypnotism. After an early supper an interesting medium would appear. In her trances memories were awakened within her which referred to her very earliest days . . . to a time when the mind was not developed enough to be able to record or describe the physical existence of the moment.

Mabuse had made the Privy Councillor's acquaintance through a patient of his, an aristocratic and wealthy dame, who had suffered from severe neurosis and whom Mabuse had very successfully treated by hypnotic suggestion. In the company were to be found not only professors, but also authors, artists and the reputed friends of art, such as frequent the society of the wealthy and fashionable nowadays.

Mabuse's neighbour at the supper-table was a lady whom he recognized with astonishment and perplexity. In the gambling-dens she was known to his accomplices by the nickname of " the dummy." The lady was Countess Told.

Throughout the meal he devoted himself to her, paying her every possible attention, and relating to her eager ears tales of strange and wonderful experiences in hazardous places, of the chase of wild animals or of human beings in parts of the world that are little frequented. He spoke with a grim earnestness, a savage unrestraint, enjoying once more in recollection the powers he had exercised in such circumstances. He realized what it was that drove this woman to the gambling-dens, and it seemed as if this sudden disclosure gave him a pang, as if there opened up within him a chasm and a gulf so deep that only a palpitating human heart could fill it. With his imagination and with his bold recital he was pursuing such a heart, as in the jungle he had pursued the tiger. The hope of conquest inflamed his blood ; he felt he must make it his own.

It was this woman's heart he wished to subjugate. He was consumed with passionate desire as he read in her eyes how his recital fired her blood. That was the kind of life she craved, and her nature understood and responded to it. He painted wild scenes for her ; he showed himself struggling for conquest with body, soul and spirit pitted against unrestrained nature, and he desired her to believe that this wild and unrestrained nature was within her.

She trembled at his words, and, swayed by his ardour, a longing for support and tenderness overcame her. The recitals by which he sought to enchain her interest aroused so forceful an impression of human power that it seemed, in tearing herself away from them, she was actually tearing a fragment of living, bleeding flesh when she sought out her husband with an almost supplicating gesture, as if desirous of protection from a force too powerful to endure.

Mabuse saw her gesture, and the blood mounted to his forehead. He was flushed with passionate desire, and could no longer bear to see the glances of others rest upon her . . . other strangers address her . . . the lips of other men pressed to her hand . . . or the thought that any other will should impose itself on her. His was the call of blood that should reach her, and inflamed with passion and desire, he left the house and drove home.

All his thoughts were centred on her, however, and as he rapidly increased the distance between them, and as it were tore the bleeding flesh from his body, he called out to the image which filled the yearning gulf within him, "Death and desire ! death and desire ! "

At home he drank until all around him had dissolved in the mists of intoxication, and he no longer saw anything but her heart, her bleeding heart, snatched by his hand from her lovely body, held in his grasp, enticing and inflaming his passion.

At length came the day when Countess Told should enter upon her prison experiences. She repaired to Wenk's chambers, and he took her to the building, making the governor *au courant* of the whole story. Before being led to the cell, she asked, "How long am I to stay there?"

"As long as you like, Countess," replied Wenk. "It all depends upon your skill, but of course you have but to say the word and you are free in an instant, even if you have not achieved your object."

"I have plenty of time," she answered, "but I should like to ask for leave next Monday, so that I can keep an appointment."

"Most certainly, we can easily arrange that. With your permission, I will come and fetch you. Besides, you are sure to have something to report by then!"

"Finally, Dr. Wenk," said the Countess, "I want you to know that my husband is in the secret, and you will go and see him, won't you? Promise me!"

Wenk assented. A warder took possession of the Countess, and as she went with him she smiled back at Wenk. "Good luck!" cried he, ere she vanished along the corridor.

The Countess had left the Privy Councillor's house in a strange tumult of feeling. The stranger who had so impressed her had suddenly disappeared, but his forceful personality had left its mark, and she could not free herself of it. This mysterious and compelling power of his effaced the image of Wenk, and the latter receded into the background.

When the door of the cell opened before her, it seemed as if the time she had to spend in this narrow space, this strange, cold chamber, so far removed from the world, would be a period of probation, a time of testing for herself.

She was to see the stranger again on Monday. "I am asking your neighbour at the supper-table next Monday for another sitting with our medium," the old Councillor had said to her with a mischievous smile. "He must make up for lost time, because he was called away unexpectedly. But if he did not see the medium asleep, at any rate he found Countess Told awake!"

"All right! I shall be pleased to meet him again," she had answered in a friendly and non-committal tone.

The door of the cell closed behind her, and she saw a figure seated on a stool, but it did not turn round. "Well?" it said growlingly.

"Good morning," said the Countess.

The dancer turned round slowly. When she at length faced the Countess, the latter uttered a little cry, and with well-feigned astonishment hastened to Cara, exclaiming, "What, *you* here, my dear! But we know each other! What a strange coincidence!"

She began chattering at once, as if quite oblivious of Cara's sullen mood. "Just imagine, they actually caught us all—at Schramm's—the most noted resort of them all! I can tell you there was a fine to-do, my dear. One man sobbed, another tried to jump out of the window, and you know they are all shut up tight! Somebody sat down and wailed, 'Oh my wife, my four children, I am disgraced for ever!' There was a tremendous fluttering in the dovecot. I could not slip away in time, and so they got me too! Tell me what is the best thing for me to do? There's nothing wrong in entering a gaming-house, and I have never once played!"

But Cara only eyed her gloomily.

"Do say something. Is there anything the matter?" pleaded the Countess.

"The matter is that I want you to leave me alone," answered the other. "Was the young gentleman with the fair sandy beard there?"

"The one who played against Basch, you mean? No, he wasn't there. I have never seen him since that night."

"Was the old Professor there?"

"No, I didn't see him either."

"Then you needn't tell me any more about it; it doesn't interest me. The whole world isn't worth a pin. I am miserable, for I am forsaken and betrayed. There's no interest left in life for me. I am lost and undone, and no one troubles any more about me than if I were a frozen field-mouse. What dirty dogs they are!"

Suddenly she sprang from her stool and seized the Countess by the shoulders. "You were with the rest of us. I want to drum it into your head," she continued with increasing vehemence, "that there never was anybody so treacherously betrayed as I have been. And there was no reason for doing it, for I was an artiste, a well-known and admired artiste, and here I am now, forsaken and betrayed! Cast aside like a squeezed-out orange!"

"Why did he forsake you?" asked the Countess shyly. In her own mind she seemed but a simple child in the presence of this wild and passionate personality. Yes, he had forsaken her, left her for ever, she reflected, and she shuddered at the thought. And now he was dead. At the moment she felt doubtful of the enterprise

she had undertaken. "He is dead," she said in a low voice which vibrated.

"Who?" cried Cara.

"Your friend . . . Hull!" answered the Countess, preparing to enter sympathetically into the girl's feelings, the image of Wenk growing yet fainter in her subconscious mind.

But the other exclaimed passionately, "What are you saying? The man I mean is not dead; he is alive, and yet I sit here in prison. Yonder in the town outside he stands, strong as a tower, firm as a rock, I tell you! How can a puny thing like you know what he was? All others were as dirt beneath his feet, and their faithlessness too small a trifle to consider! Hull is dead, but what does *that* matter? Who cares an atom about *him*? But that other, the master, the lord, he lives there in the free air, where there is light and love and life . . . where he might bear to have me lying at his feet, like a rug that only serves to warm his toes. He is the great man, the lord, the master! He is a bear, a lion, a royal Bengal tiger, do you hear? He does not belong to this cold and frosty land; he comes from Bengal, from paradise, from a place I shall never see again! And I—I—am left to linger in this dungeon!"

Suddenly she said, quite calmly and seriously, "Tell me, do you think there are men whose will is so strong that they can break down even these walls when they know how passionately I desire it?"

"There are no such men outside, but within us there are!" answered the Countess, carried away by the vehemence of that passionate storm of feeling which had so lately broken over her. How contemptible it was of her, she thought, to have desired to outwit a human being. She felt mean in her own estimation, and casting all projects and promises to the winds, she began to glow in the presence of this strange personality like the spark of an electric current. "Yes, they are to be found in us!" she repeated

"He! he! the conqueror!" sang Cara, with a sound of passion in her tone, and in the Countess's heart, too, there sprang up, like a marble image, the form of the man she had met a few evenings before. On her heart this image was sculptured, and she allowed its impress to recur again and again and remain there.

"Do you love him?" she asked the dancer.

But the other answered, as if brushing away an unconsidered trifle, "I . . . love? I *adore* him!"

"I do not love him!" hastily asseverated the Countess, pursuing the mental image she had conjured up. "But yet he is great, superhuman. He is a world in himself. In the midst of this tame and quiet existence he is as a jungle and primeval forest. It seems to me as if he must have both the tiger and the serpent within him, as well as all that is boldest in Nature, its gigantic trees, its wild and impenetrable forests. Do you know, one can creep within them, never coming to an end, and yet be in him!"

She broke off suddenly. She dared not put into words the fancies evoked within her. For the husband whose eccentricities she tolerated

was no more to her than a brother—nay, a father. They were bound together by one voluptuous hour of which no human being knew or even suspected. It was such an hour as that in which two human personalities melted into one to create a new being that later on might emerge and begin a life bound by invisible ties to that mysterious hour. The threads might be torn from their place, snapped, distorted, yet they remained entwined. No other desire now possessed her than to yield her senses once more unrestrainedly to that consciousness of the depths of her being which enfolded her as in a dream, and which she nevertheless continually thrust aside.

The two women sat close together, the Countess on the ground. Both seemed alike to be struck down by an invisible and imperious fist, striking at these centres of abandonment and yearning and self-betrayal. After the hasty and intimate avowals forced from them, the shadow of silence fell upon them.

"Say something!" pleaded the Countess timidly.

"Be silent, or I shall strangle you . . . with my own hands!" cried the dancer.

The Countess shrank back, feeling herself, beside the other, to resemble a hare in the claws of a mighty and powerful bird of prey.

Food was pushed into the cell, but neither of the women perceived it. It grew dark, and the dancer lay down, fully dressed, upon one of the plank beds. The Countess imitated her and stretched herself on the other straw pallet. The night passed by, and in the long sleepless hours their fancies flowed into a dark and turgid stream.

Suddenly in the gloom Cara's voice was heard : " Are you asleep? "

" No."

" Why are you here? "

The Countess had not the courage to repeat her tissue of lies, and she remained silent. Cara, too, kept silent for a while, then she said suddenly :

" You were sent here to pump me ! Have I told you anything? "

" Yes."

" About *him*? "

" Yes."

" Did I tell you his name? "

" No."

" That's all right then, otherwise you would never leave this place alive. But if you are lying, and I had told it you, I tell you now, he *has* no name. He is a thousand men, a whole nation, a part of the universe ! "

" Just like the man I have been thinking of," reflected the Countess, but an instant later she did not know whether she had not spoken her thought aloud.

" When are you going away again? "

" When you want me to."

" Then go at once, and tell everything I have told you ! "

" No," answered the Countess resolutely.

" Why don't you, when that is what you came here for? "

" Things are different now."

" Nothing is different," asserted the dancer

vehemently. " Everything is as it was and will ever be. He is out there, free as the air ; I am here like a carcass rotting on the ground. Tell everything you know."

" I shall say nothing ! "

" Why not, you—you cursed hussy ! " she shrieked.

" Because you love him so ! "

Then the dancer grew calm again, but a few moments later she burst into tears and sobbed wildly and unrestrainedly.

The Countess lay still on her pallet. She felt as if a naked soul with claws, whence the skin and tissues had been withdrawn, were clutching at her heart and holding it within its grasp. She felt her own blood shudder and leap up beneath the claws and mingle with that of the other. This naked soul that clutched at her was her sister. She was akin in blood to the criminal yonder, but neither of the women knew that he who had thus caused their hearts to beat in unison during this night in prison was one and the same mysterious being.

XI

THE news Wenk received of Karstens' state was very unsatisfactory. Since he had, apparently, offered strong resistance to his attackers, a second man seemed to have struck him violently on the head with a crowbar, and the blow had resulted in concussion of the brain. At intervals he became conscious, but for short periods only, and at present it was impossible to say what the outcome would be. His state was so critical, the doctor declared, that any sustained conversation with him could not be thought of for at least two or three weeks.

As for the dancer, about whose participation in the affair he would have something to say, as his shout to the constables to take her into custody proved, Wenk had for the present to content himself with any evidence the Countess might obtain. To-day was Monday, and at four o'clock in any case he would hear whether any explanation might be looked for from Cara Carozza.

He did not leave the house that day. The two main centres of his activity could not be reached by him in person; one was the women's prison, the other, and far more important, was the town of Constance. He was frequently called up by telephone from the latter place, for this

Poldringer had to be kept constantly under surveillance.

While spending the waiting hours at home impatiently, he frequently walked backwards and forwards to the window. On one of these occasions he noticed a man whom he had first seen as early as eight o'clock, and again half an hour later, and then not again for some time. The man always happened to be passing the house rapidly, or else standing at a turning some distance off. Could it be that he was there to spy upon his movements? Wenk resolved to put the matter to the test.

He ordered one of the members of the Secret Police to disguise himself so that anyone at a hasty glance might mistake him for the State Attorney. Then Wenk's chauffeur brought round the car to the door where the masquerader was waiting, and at a moment when the stranger was again visible at a corner this man got in quickly, settled himself down inside, and was rapidly driven away. "I shall be able to see how this simple trick succeeds," said Wenk to himself.

At this moment there was an urgent call from Constance. "The man under observation brought the young fellows in his company to the station at 3.16 p.m. The Offenburg express is due to leave at 3.36. It is uncertain which of the party will travel by it; some have hand luggage, and the others none, and it is not yet ascertainable whether the suspected man will accompany them. One of them bought seven tickets for Offenburg, but the party consists of eight, and one among them looks different and has never been seen here before. It is possible that he may be the leader of the expedition, and in the service of the French. How are we to proceed?"

"Have three plain-clothes police ready. If the eight go by train, let these three go too. If one or more stay behind, let one of the men be left too, so that those remaining are not allowed out of sight. They may be travelling by separate routes."

The telephone official repeated the order given. "Good. Arrange to speak to me immediately after the departure of the express. Ring off."

Wenk asked to be connected with Offenburg, and in five minutes he was able to get on to the police there.

"Seven, or possibly eight, men are arriving by the express from Constance. Plain-clothes men are in the same train. See that sixteen armed police are in readiness at the station. It is probable that the travellers will have passes to Alsace. They are forged. . . . When you arrest the men, be careful to avoid observation, and the only information to be given to the Press is that it was a case of Germans having been enticed into the Foreign Legion; and mind you state expressly that they will be at once set free and returned to their homes. You will know nothing about the forged passports. In case there is a man of the name of Poldringer or Hinrichsen among them, let him be separated from the rest and kept in close custody."

Shortly after Constance telephoned again: "Seven men have left. It is Poldringer who stayed behind; he went to the 'Black Bull,' and is under observation there."

"Good. Thank you. Please ring up here again at seven o'clock, and should anything important occur in the meantime, notify the Criminal Investigation Department."

Then Wenk had to hurry, so that he might call for the Countess at the prison at four o'clock. It was then half-past three, and he was alone in the house. He telephoned for his car, and just as he was going downstairs he heard a knock at the front door. He opened it.

An elderly man was standing there. His figure was bent, and he had a bushy snow-white beard, red cheeks and blue eyes.

"Herr von Wenk?" he inquired courteously.

"Please come in," answered the lawyer, "but I am sorry to say that I am just going out on urgent official business."

"I will not detain you a moment," said the other. "My name is Hull, and I am the father of the murdered man!"

Wenk bowed, and led the way to his office.

"Herr von Wenk, I have been told that you are conducting this inquiry. Edgar was my only son, and I brought him up badly, for my whole time was given to my business, and I had vast interests. My wife died when he was but a child. I think many sons in our days have had a similar experience." He spoke evenly, almost harshly. "But that does not free me from blame. Our sons were our pleasure, our business our duty. It would have been better had it been the other way about. I cannot desire such a life as his to be restored, for what I have heard from various sides about the circumstances of the case is sufficient, and I do not wish to know more, but I have allowed myself the liberty of calling upon you for other reasons. My son used to receive an income of ten thousand marks from me each month, and the only wish left me in this unhappy affair is to be able to spend these ten thousand marks as if he were still living, and add another ten thousand to them. I want the money to be used to help men to make good, and how am I to set about this? Can you advise me, sir?"

Wenk answered in a hesitating tone, "I must first of all confess, Herr von Hull, that your words have taken me aback!"

This man's bearing moved him deeply. Restrained force of character, suppressed paternal grief, unutterable sympathy . . . everything that had thus unexpectedly been laid bare to him, threw him for the moment somewhat off his balance. "Yes. I don't know . . . Herr von Hull, why did you come to *me* above all men?"

"I can tell you that at once, sir. It is your task to bring the murderers to justice, and I should like to replace with something that is beneficial the harm that has been done by one of my house. I should like the recollection of my son to bear good fruit. I have had nothing of his life, but perchance his death may yield something that may plead for me in eternity." His voice remained firm until the last word had been uttered. "But I must not forget that you are in a hurry," he continued. "Perhaps it is this same unhappy affair which prevents your giving me any more time now?"

"You are right," said the lawyer.

"Can I see you to-morrow or some other d when we can talk quietly, when you are free?"

"I shall be free to-morrow, my dear sir. Come when most convenient to you, preferably in the morning. You are not obliged to fix an exact time, for I shall be at home all day. I thank you for your suggestion; we shall be enabled to do a splendid piece of work together, I believe."

"Nay, it is I who must thank you for being willing to help me raise a memorial to my unhappy boy that shall redeem his name among his fellow-men."

They left the house together, and Wenk drove rapidly to the prison. "The lady left here long before four o'clock," said the Governor.

"Indeed!" said Wenk, disappointed. "What did she leave for me?"

"Nothing!"

"And you yourself know nothing either? About the matter she had in hand, did she get any results?"

"I did not inquire."

"Why not?" said Wenk, annoyed by his manner.

"I was not instructed to do so," answered the Governor morosely.

"It is not a question of your exact instructions, but of attempting to track to earth one of the most dangerous bands of criminals Germany has ever known. You don't seem to realize that. What you and your instructions may be counts for nothing."

"So much the better. Perhaps another time I may be spared such innovations. . . ."

"You do not seem to feel yourself thoroughly comfortable in your post, Governor. I will say a word for you to the Home Secretary! Good morning."

"What has happened?" said Wenk to himself. "What is up?" He felt disappointed and angry as he took his seat in the car again.

At seven o'clock that evening the Countess drove to the Privy Councillor's mansion. She found the same company assembled there as on the last occasion, and this time, too, she saw as little of them. Around her and Dr. Mabuse, her partner at the supper-table, the conversation rose and fell, isolating them from the rest. Her neighbour was more silent than on the previous occasion, but everything he said was spoken with an impressive intent, directed towards a goal which was unrecognizable.

The Countess was divided in her own mind as to whether she should relate her experience in the prison to him, should tell him that she had come in contact with the soul of a woman, strong and fearless as the figures in his own recitals; yea, even stronger, since it was a woman, experienced in renunciation, and carrying on her conflict in resistance and defence.

In imagination she had entered so thoroughly into the struggle, and her encounter with this criminal seemed to open up such unusual circumstances, that the power of the man at her side insensibly seemed to lessen, and this second meeting with him appeared to yield nothing that her passionate anticipation had longed for. The man seemed to decline before her.

She noticed that while he uttered his imperious sentences, both at their first meeting and on this occasion, he kept his eyes fixed on her with a compelling look. They were grey eyes, and their glance was a steely one. She grew somewhat frightened, and in her anxiety yearned for some human being who could warm her breast with his sympathy and afford her troubled spirit peace.

She looked across at her husband. He was sitting near the medium, engaging her in talk, and it seemed as if his words were the mere play of his graceful fingers, on one of which the ring was flashing, as if dominating the whole. Then the woman's heart was overcome with a strange sad feeling, stilling the fever in her breast—a feeling of lofty womanly sympathy. He seemed such a child, she said to herself. "Without me he would be defenceless. He is like a hoop rolling down the street, its course determined by the obstacles and unevennesses in its path."

With this feeling upon her, she experienced a renewed glow as she thought of her encounter with the dancer; she was lifted out of her everyday existence, borne onward as in a mighty rush of passion, then again becoming cool and collected as at the contact with something cold and forbidding. It seemed to her then that she was struggling to reach her husband and ever as she approached him she was driven back, encountering the inflexible and steely glance of the man beside her.

Mabuse grew more and more silent. He ate nothing, and he took no pains to conceal his taciturnity. On the contrary, he seemed, as it were, to strive to impress it upon the whole company, just as a mighty African potentate might exercise his tyranny on his patient and long-suffering followers, and the very actions of the others served to accentuate this attitude of adoration of a superior force.

Count Told alone seemed to trifle with graceful gestures about the medium, who, black-haired and deadly pale, kept her unwieldy form pressed close to his side, seeming to have eyes for no other. Then the Countess felt that she hated the man who sat beside her in his sullen mood while her husband's attitude was thus bordering on the ridiculous. And yet it was not hate she felt, but the inward conflict between the desire to yield herself to the domination of a self-sufficing and stronger heart and brain and resistance to the impulse of subjugation.

The supper-table was cleared and the company stood around talking for a while. Mabuse had left his table-companion and sought the society of Count Told. He engaged him in a discourse on the psychological aspect of gambling.

" I am a born gambler," said the Count. " When I am losing, I remain as cold as ice, but when I am winning my brain lights up and my phantasies are redoubled."

Then Mabuse said: " Games of chance are the oldest form, the strongest and most widespread form, in which a man who is not gifted with artistic expression may yet feel himself an artist."

" That is an interesting idea," said the Count; " pray follow it up a little further."

" It is because in a game of chance every man feels that he can force himself to a creative act. Creation, through the principle which underlies all life, draws its force from the parallel powers of volition and accident. By accident we must understand all that is untried, immeasurable, strange, and impossible of expression in itself. This is, too, the mental process of creative work, to which nature has lent a portion of primal force, the work of the artist! Between the poles of volition and accident this power is wielded as in a state of trance. Goethe confessed that to be the case with himself when he was composing his poems. In games of chance there is a like synthesis. Accident gives the player his material —it may be trifling and insignificant, or it may be of dominating power. The player sets his will to work to accomplish a creation of his own from his material."

" You are a poet yourself, Doctor? "

" Oh, no, I am a physician practising psychotherapy."

" Such people are our most modern poets. For they give our knowledge of the unconscious, or rather the subconscious, its perceptible form, and the subconscious world, which is now firmly established, produces our psychic existence. We will have a game of baccarat afterwards, shall we not? "

" Agreed! "

The hypnotic subject was about to begin her test. A doctor led her forward and threw her into a hypnosis in which she would recall her wonderful recollections. On the first evening, as Count Told informed Mabuse in an awestruck whisper, she had related her mental experiences during her first attempts to walk.

While the Count was speaking he felt an unnatural warmth stealing over the back of his head. He turned round, but there was nothing behind him save the tapestried wall, upon which pictures of the old school, to which he was quite indifferent, were hanging.

The patient did not respond to the hypnotist's suggestions. She did indeed fall into a state of trance, but all the spectators could see that gradually the expression of her eyes indicated that she was returning from a far-off view, until suddenly they looked straight ahead and were wide awake again, awake and indignant.

"Someone is tormenting me," she said.

"No one is tormenting you," said the hypnotist in a monotonous and measured tone. "We are guiding you to the early home of your youth—one, two, three . . . you are sleeping—one, two . . . you are sleeping!"

He passed his hand slowly and lightly over her forehead, continuing to count, "Three . . . one . . . two . . . where are you now?—how old are you?"

"I am ten months and three days old."

"What did your mother do this morning when she took you out of the cradle?"

"She unwrapped me and hurt me and . . . and . . ." She breathed a deep sigh, then awoke suddenly and said, "There is someone here who ought to go away. Who is tormenting me?"

"We can obtain no results to-day. There are some disturbing influences which I do not rec nize and therefore cannot remove," said t hypnotist.

The Privy Councillor approached Mabuse. "How would it be, Doctor, if *you* were to make an attempt? After the tests of your power which I have already seen, I think we can promise to get rid of these disturbing influences," he said.

Mabuse declared himself willing to try, at any rate, though he could not vouch for the result, as he was suffering from a slight chill which affected his head. He at once took a short step towards the medium, however, and they saw that she moved slightly in his direction as if attracted by a magnet. Mabuse did not utter a word, but he let his glance wander over part of her body. The girl became even paler than before, if possible, and although she made no movement, it was easy to see that she struggled against something invisible, that her resistance grew quickly weaker and that her eyes fell before him.

Then Mabuse said in a rapid and violent tone: "You are lying in swaddling clothes. Your arms are bound fast to your side. You are six months' old. It is evening, and you are crying. Why are you crying?"

And from the heavy body of this girl, sleeping with wide-open eyes, there came a piping, fretful voice: "I have a pain in my stomach."

"That is only wind. You've had too much to drink. Who gave it you?"

"I got it from the breast of a woman," answered the baby voice.

"Do you love that breast?"

Then the girl grew deathly white, and into the childish voice there crept a piercing and angry note, "No."

"What did you want to do?"

"I wanted to bite it with my gums!"

"Why?"

Then the girl was seized with trembling, which passed over her whole body, and Mabuse said, "Every minute that prolongs this endangers her life. I must bring the experiment to an end!"

He laid the girl down on a sofa, and with reassuring movements he released her from sleep and bathed her face, and when she came to herself again recommended her being put to bed.

The conversation now turned upon Mabuse's experiment, and everyone was asking questions, speculating on what she would have said.

"That was a fairy-tale," said Told; "a fable of the preconscious existence! Doctor, you are a genius. But what did she want to say that made her tremble so?"

A lady came forward with the same question on her lips, but Mabuse's eyes sought the Countess, and she, too, came forward to ask. Then Mabuse answered, "She wanted to say, 'Because I hated her so!'"

The Countess shrank back and the others were silent, painfully affected. Then the Countess leaned forward, saying coldly, "A baby cannot hate!"

"How do you know that?" asked Mabuse roughly.

"I know it . . . of myself," she replied.

"Then you can rejoice over yourself, for you are not only a genius at recollection, but also an angel in disposition!" retorted Mabuse sarcastically.

Conversation broke the company up into little groups. Count Told alone remained silent. There was still that unnatural warmth at the back of his head. He looked behind him, and he felt his head; there was nothing there. He went to a mirror, but nothing was to be seen. He sat down again and it seemed as if he were falling asleep, yet he saw them all and heard everything. He wanted to say something, but it seemed as if the words were plucked from his mouth like ripened fruit ready to fall.

After a short time had passed thus, he rose and went to the group wherein Dr. Mabuse was standing, saying, "We were going to play baccarat!"

"So we were!" answered Mabuse. "Shall we be likely to find enough players?"

Then Told grew wide-awake and eager. "It will be fine, playing baccarat with you. Herr Wendel, will you join us, eh?"

"I must attend to my social duties among the ladies," answered the Privy Councillor, "but you will soon be able to find partners!"

Six gentlemen quickly gathered round the card-table which stood in a part of the room leading to the conservatory. The lamp with its enormous shade hung low over the table, leaving the rest of the room in the half-light. In the conservatory, to which a glass door led, the ghostly branches of foreign palms could be seen outlined against the glass, and in the moonlight they looked like stiff forms stretching their dark limbs heavenwards.

They cut the cards to see who should be the first to hold the stakes. The visitors crowded round the card-table and Countess Told stood in the dim light, looking down upon it. Mabuse saw her smooth white skin gleaming from the rich dark red dress she wore. His bearing was cold and gloomy, and scarcely a word escaped his lips. The feelings that arose within him were sternly suppressed, and his thoughts were busy with Count Told alone. When anyone addressed him, he answered abruptly. He seemed to pay great attention to the game, but he played by leaps and bounds.

Soon the gentlemen who had begun their game with modest stakes began to imitate his example, and there was no unanimity in the value of the stakes. Beside a stake of a mark or two there stood a fifty-mark note, and then one for two hundred. The small stake seemed to feel ashamed ; it rapidly became twenty, and still faster it grew to a hundred, to two hundred. . . . Very soon there was no player who ventured less than a hundred marks. When they began they found time for conversation between the end of the hand and the fresh deal, but after a time the talk grew less, and then ceased. The onlookers, too, became silent. The contest between the players grew more pronounced, the game feverish, and this excitement spread to the spectators.

The Countess noted the high stakes her husband wagered. " He has never played before," she thought. " What is the matter with him? "

The Count was winning. He let his winnings accumulate. It seemed as if he were a horse, urged and threatened onward by an eager rider.

He threw his money down. It was now his turn to hold the stakes. It seemed to him as if the moment in which he should deal the cards and undertake the manifold risks of gain or loss would be a supreme experience for him, yielding rich secrets of wonderful joy. He grew excited, and his phantasies played about the room.

The Countess turned aside in the half-light, constrained at her husband's incomprehensible actions. Suddenly the full light of the lamp fell upon her, revealing where her slender breast rose white and stately from the enclosing circle of her gown.

" North and south ! " said Mabuse, as he contemplated her lovely figure, " north and south, your turn is coming," and his tone was sinister and threatening. Then he turned his glance away, and it fell upon Count Told's hands as he took over the bank at this moment. He dealt the cards out, and hesitated a moment as if perplexed at some strange occurrence. He was relieved when he had distributed the pack. He won considerable sums, and it was singular that the same feeling of perplexity recurred. He won a second time, and now this seemed to happen continually. Players and spectators alike were astonished at the run of luck the Count's game exhibited.

" Look at your husband," said someone, turning to the Countess ; " he is winning every hand."

They all cast a glance at the Countess and then quickly returned to their cards. The Count dealt the cards once more. He disclosed his cards ; he had two picture cards and was about to buy another.

" Halt ! " cried a voice suddenly, like the voice of a drill sergeant, and a hand was laid roughly on the table, reaching the white and delicate hand of the Count, on which the jewelled ring was sparkling, and turning it over. Then all the company saw that the Count had been about to take a card from underneath the pack instead of the one that lay on the top. The card was a nine.

" Aha, a nine ! *Now* I understand your luck, you gudgeon ! You are a common cheat ! "

They all sprang up in confusion. Count Told sat still in his chair, in a state of utter collapse. He seemed absolutely crushed, finding no word to say.

" Give the money here ! " cried the harsh voice again. " All of it ! " The tone was threatening.

The spectators and the players were crowding together, and a cry rang through the obscurity. Through the hasty movements of the powerful man who had seized the Count, one man had fallen to the ground, dragging another down with him. The latter clutched at the tablecloth, and it was pulled off, money and cards being strewn over the floor, people flinging themselves upon it. Suddenly the electric lights went out, but Dr. Mabuse, who had waited for the cry from the dark corner, rushed to the fainting Countess, lifted her in his arms and with one spring bore her under the palms and out into the garden under the moonlight, through the shrubbery and to the wall leading to the street. He lifted her over, and from the other side someone helped him with his burden. An instant later a car was stealing swiftly down the street.

" The northern and southern hemispheres," he

shouted aloud furiously during the drive. " Now I hold you both ! "

The Xenienstrasse was empty. The car came to a sudden standstill. He carried the Countess, still unconscious, into his house.

XII

SCARCELY heeding the abuse and scorn heaped upon him by the crowd, out of the chaos and confusion of the contemptuous glances of others and his own feeling of perplexity, Count Told stole, as if in a dream, towards the vestibule. He thought of his wife, but he had not the courage to look round for or inquire about her. His car stood before the door, and the chauffeur was about to start the engine when the Count made a gesture of denial, saying, "Wait for the Countess!"

He went into the town and hired the first taxi he saw to drive him home. "What has happened to me?" was the question that he perpetually put to himself. "What was it that overcame me? Who moved my hand? . . . What is it that has happened? I know nothing about it. Can it be merely a bad dream?"

But it was no dream. He reached his house and had to descend. He went down the length of the garden and into the house. The footman took his coat, and the Count went to the room where he and his wife, whenever they had been out together, were wont to spend a short time before going to bed, in exchanging the experiences the evening had afforded. He always looked forward eagerly to these moments.

To-night he was alone there. "Where can my wife be?" he asked himself, astonished and yet unconscious. So many tender memories clung to this room, and he felt disappointed that in this dreadful hour she was not by his side. It was the first painful experience of his existence.

But all at once it became clear to him that she must have sundered herself from him, and he realized that by that inexpressibly strange occurrence at the gaming-table in the Wendel mansion he had covered himself with mire. It clung fast to him, and he thought, "Lucy must leave me. She must remain away until I have purified myself." But how was he to accomplish the task?

And suddenly there came over him, like an icy blast in all its pitiless severity, the full meaning of what he had done. He had done it, he really had put cards at the bottom of the pack and then drawn them when he wanted them, and with these he had won money. Yet he had not desired to win money! What could have happened? Was there no help anywhere? He had done something against his will. His act had thrust him out of decent society, and to the end of his days he would be known as a cheat. Was there no help to be found?

"I know now," he said to himself, "what it is I have done, but I do not know how I came to do it, neither the why nor the wherefore. I am growing crazy, losing my self-confidence, and I shall henceforth be unable to feel safe, whatever I do. Horrible, monstrous thought! I am absolutely afraid of myself. How can I ever have reached such a point? Yonder is a sculpture by

Archipenko and the picture hanging there is one of Kokoschka's; I am quite certain of that; but what proceeds from my own brain, and is my own creation, of that I can never more feel certain again. I retain my sight, hearing and feelings, but my brain is rotting! . . . I shall end in a lunatic asylum! My body moves in the light of day while my mental powers are wrapped in a dim twilight. Is there no one that can help me?"

He struggled with his tears, but he could not even allow himself to weep, for he thought, "Perhaps I shall lose all consciousness of what I am doing. If I weep, may I not possibly destroy a picture that I have hitherto loved and worshipped, or abuse my man, or act improperly to Lucy's maid?"

And suddenly, at the utterance of his wife's name, he collapsed entirely. "Ah, Lucy, light of my life, can *you* not help me?" he cried. "Will you not come? Have you no longer faith in me? Why am I left alone?"

He rang, and then, hastening to meet the footman, inquired for the Countess.

"The Countess has not yet returned," he was told.

"Nor telephoned? Has she not . . ."

"No, my lord, but an hour ago Herr Dr. von Wenk rang up, asking if he might have the honour of waiting on her ladyship to-morrow morning. His telephone number has been written down."

"Go!" said the Count. "I will go to Dr. Wenk . . . yes, to Dr. Wenk," he thought, and then, a prey to a thousand nameless fears, he cried aloud, "Or else I shall hang myself! I must be able to tell some human being what I feel. . . ."

He hurried to the telephone, giving the number written down. "Yes, this is the State Attorney, Dr. Wenk!" answered a strange voice in the distance, and Told began to tremble. But he rallied all his energy and self-control, saying, "Can I speak to you at once?"

He was terribly afraid that the fever of his desire might melt the connecting wire and that he might get no answer. He breathed freely again when he heard the words, "With pleasure! I shall expect you!"

"Fritz!" he shouted; "get the two-seater ready," and he drove back to Munich.

Wenk believed he had come on the Countess's errand, and that something had happened in the prison to put an end to the enterprise they had in hand.

"I think, Count Told, that after all it was too risky an experiment. The Countess . . ."

"No, no," cried Told, interrupting him. "I . . . I . . . it is on my own account that I've come here," and then he began his story. He told, too, what an extraordinary sensation of heat he had felt at the back of his head, and this must have been the forerunner of misfortune. "Do not be vexed, Dr. Wenk, that I, a stranger, should come to you thus, but I should have had to put an end to myself if I had not been able to confide in someone to-night. May I go on? Well, these powerful rays, that were like red-hot iron at the back of my head, changed gradually to a feeling of well-being throughout my whole body.

They seemed to bathe me in pleasant warmth, and I had a feeling that I was somehow saved from something that lay before me, and in this very moment of relief . . . it happened ! In the first half-hour afterwards I denied that it could have done, but when I reached home I realized that the dreadful story was true, and this thing had really happened. There is no getting away from it, either for others or for myself."

Wenk at once recalled his experience with the old Professor. He was startled. Could it be possible that here too . . . and he thought of the Countess and of Cara Carozza. He asked Told, "Have you any suspicion at all?"

The Count did not understand the question.

"Any suspicion? What do you mean? That I have been like this before? Ill in this way? No, never !"

"No, a suspicion of any special person who was there?"

"The idea never occurred to me. I can't understand how anybody else could . . . No . . . I don't suspect anyone !"

"Was there nobody in the company who did not seem to belong there, who was not quite like the other guests?"

"It was a company of the Privy Councillor's intimate friends. No, there was nobody !"

Wenk rejected the idea. Besides, how could there be any connection between the criminal he was seeking and the Count's act of cheating? It was apparently a momentary mental aberration, a loss of will-power. A subconscious process in a strange and elusive personality which bordered

upon morbidity, which thus strove
mental impression upon its fellow-pla
Count ought to consult a psychiatrist.
extraordinary that he should appeal to
criminal prosecutor, but he did not put any
tion to him on this head.

Told became silent, and the lawyer respec
his mood. Then suddenly he seemed to pull himself together and said, "I realize that I am keeping you from your night's rest ; I beg you not to be vexed with me. In misfortune it seems as if the mind sinks into a gulf, and the consciousness grasps at the nearest support. You had rung up, and there was some connection between you and . . . my house, and so . . ." He broke off. "But tell me, am I really saying what I want to, or am I talking nonsense? You see, that is the horror of such an experience as mine. It seems as if I shall always require a neurologist to guide my future life."

"Reassure yourself, Count ; you are speaking quite clearly and saying exactly what you want to express. I beg you to make use of me if you can. My calling in some respects borders upon the sphere of the specialist in nerve-disorders ; perhaps it goes even further, and at any rate it is bound up with the most mysterious and most speculative part of man's being. I am very sorry that the occasion that brings you to me is such an unfortunate one, else I should be only too pleased by your visit."

While Wenk was speaking, desiring to convey that anything out of the common which was mentally or spiritually of an unusual and critical nature was really his concern, the idea occurred to him to enlist the Count's sympathy in his own aims. Count Told was a man of the world. He belonged to a sphere through which Wenk hoped to be able to endow the life of the nation with nobler qualities and loftier ideals. In the practical necessities which the last few months had forced upon him he had almost neglected the ideal side of the task before him. The events of this night had brought him into unexpected relations with a human being, and he could best serve him by not leaving him alone. He explained his views to the Count.

" They talk of ours as the ' upper ' class. This description, which certainly has a substratum of truth, must be made a living reality once more. Our class, free of the struggle to obtain a better social status, is more than ever called upon to foster intellectual development and mental gifts. It must cherish these noble qualities in itself and turn them to account for others. Our sphere of politics must be the spiritual one ! "

Count Told's life hitherto had been irreproachable. Both in sentiment and in the externals of life he had shown himself superior, but for lack of serious pursuits to which he could devote himself he had thrown his energies into following up his hobbies, such as the collection of Futurist works of art, for which there was as yet no standard to judge by. He patronized young poets who were at present but a minority and a novelty. They were brought into the light, and the discovery of their powers engaged the serious attention of himself and his like. The struggle to get possession

of something new and striking was carried on in this respect just as it was by the profiteers of ordinary wares. . . . It was not the uneducated rich who devoted themselves to it, but those who sought for their wealth a channel which should return their gold stamped with the impress of beauty and of intellectual superiority. But these fell victims to the age, and their ideas dissolved in hysteria akin to that of a weeping woman whose whole consciousness can hold but one idea. The value of money declined, and in so doing its power over men became all the greater ; it seized upon them with ever-growing force, till at last it was like a disease.

Such was the connection between the hobbies of the Count and his like and the age they lived in. The age made use of what was valuable in them. The propagandists of the " new art " were merely stockjobbers, uniting their intellectual ambitions with their speculations. The celebrated " Blue Horses " were to be had for a couple of hundred marks at first. X. bought them for eight hundred, and now it was impossible to obtain them for two hundred thousand. It was such anecdotes as these that spurred them on.

For a long time Wenk and Count Told discussed these things. The Count opposed Wenk's view, having learnt some of the terminology of the artists whose pictures he bought.

" Folks even begin to say," said Wenk to him on one occasion, " that he speaks as well as a Futurist ! And this school begins to affiliate itself with another intellectual movement of our day, which stands on much the same foundations—with the so-called theosophy. You will notice that the Futurist *eo ipso* is also a theosophist or an anthropologist. But it is not because these ideas are really inwardly connected, but because the pursuance of them is united. You will always find nowadays that those who most freely deplore the materialism of our age are those who in private life are most devoted to it. Moreover, in the one case as in the other, it is not always a question of money. Mental and spiritual greed is also an aspect of this age, which exchanges the dominion of one for that of another. Everywhere folks are seeking, seeking eagerly to escape from the misery of the present, and for us mortals there remains but warfare—war against those near us, against those among us, and against ourselves, and it is our class especially which must wage war against ourselves ! "

Wenk then asked the Count whether he would not spend the night with him, as it was now so late.

The Count answered involuntarily, " Yes, but my wife . . ." Then he stopped, looking at Wenk, and his face showed the return of his tormenting thoughts. After a time he began again: " You had caused me to forget my trouble, Dr. Wenk ! For this night I have robbed you of, which you have devoted to me so sympathetically, I shall eternally be in your debt. I cannot think how I should have lived through it—alone ! Now it seems to be behind me, and I gratefully accept your offer of a bed."

" How would you like," said Wenk to Count Told next morning, " for me to see the Privy Councillor and relate your story to him? "

" I should be extremely glad if you would."

He hesitated as if he wanted to say something more. Wenk noticed it and waited. Then he said, anticipating the other, " I am absolutely at your service. If you have any other wish . . ."

The Count answered quickly, reddening as he spoke, " Yes, I want to speak to my wife. When I think of her I feel . . . so ashamed ! "

" You need not be ashamed ! "

" My wife has such a strong and forceful idea of life. It always seemed as if she found our life together a somewhat feeble thing. . . . I wonder whether it will be possible for her to go on living with a husband who henceforth is but an invalid."

" I will see her, too," said Wenk.

The Privy Councillor received Wenk at once. As amiably as he could, and in the pleasantly sarcastic tone which distinguished him on all occasions, he told Wenk that his opinion was that the Count had been anxious to adventure something that might raise him in his wife's esteem. The force of her personality stood far above his own, and he hoped to attain to it by undertaking so hazardous a scheme as to " pack " the cards and win the game. It was not on account of the money, he was convinced of that. He merely wanted to exercise his imagination in adventure as his wife did, but her strength of character always ensured a safe way of escape. For the more feeble personality the first attempt had ended in misfortune. His phantasies had been excited by the current stories of the thieving band of gambling cheats, and the whole affair was mainly due to his neighbour at the table, whose own desire for gain influenced a weaker character and thus paved the way to a society scandal.

" May I inquire, sir, who this neighbour was? "

" Ah, now that I have been so unamiable as to speak of him thus, I cannot possibly betray him. Moreover, he is the blameless head of a household, a professor of physiology."

" The matter is a great deal more serious than you can have any idea of, sir. The Count spent last night with me, driven to get away from himself. He told me the story, down to the most trifling detail, and I have no reason whatever to suspect that he was misrepresenting the facts. He was absolutely confounded and crushed by the affair. It seemed as if it had been a failure of intellectual force, a sudden inhibition of brain-control. May there not have been someone among your guests who exercised some special influence on the Count? "

" No, there was no Futurist poet or painter among them," laughed the Privy Councillor.

" I beg you not to consider my questions importunate, Councillor. You really are convinced that no such person was present? "

" I do not believe there could have been any. All my guests have been personally known to me for some time. You know what the occasion of our meeting was, don't you? We were studying the effect of hypnosis on a medium. There were experts, professors, artists of repute, and some personal friends in the company. Then there was a Dr. Mabuse, whom I have not known very long,

but whose extraordinary success as a practitioner I respect very highly. He practises psychotherapy. And that reminds me. If Count Told's state is such as you describe it to be, we might see what he can do for the Count, who is the son of one of my very oldest friends, for I feel a great deal of sympathy for him in his present position. Tell him from me that I strongly advise his seeing Dr. Mabuse, to whom I will give him a letter, for I know his telephone number only."

Wenk said farewell, and drove from the house to Count Told's villa at Tutzing, hoping that he might find the Countess there, but he was told by the footman that neither his master nor his mistress had spent the night at home. Then he returned to his own chambers, where the Count, pale and haggard, waited eagerly for him.

" I felt sure of it," he said disconsolately, when Wenk told him that the Countess had not returned home, " but one always hopes for the impossible. And what about the Privy Councillor? "

" I told him exactly what you told me ; he had regarded the matter in another light, but not a very serious one. He advises you to consult a neurologist whom he knows, and has given me this letter to him for you."

" Dr. Mabuse," read the Count. " Why, he was at the party last night."

" Shall I go to him? " suggested Wenk.

" No, Doctor, I really must not rely on your kindness any longer. I must pull myself together and deal with this crisis in my life. I will call up Dr. Mabuse on the telephone, as we have his number there. I will do it from here, if I may."

"Dr. Mabuse," said the Count at the telephone, "you were present at Privy Councillor Wendel's party last night when I had the misfortune to . . ."

"That is so."

"I want your professional help. The Councillor gave me a letter of introduction to you. Can I bring it at once?"

The other voice answered harshly, "No. I do not see patients except in their own homes. What is your address? Expect me there to-morrow morning at 11 a.m. Repeat the appointment; what time is fixed?"

"Eleven a.m.," said the Count, thoroughly terrified, and then he left Wenk's house.

XIII

THE Countess opened her eyes on something black, intersected with red circles and rays. All around her was dark and strange. Somewhere on high a faint light was glimmering in the room in which she lay. She was on a sofa, fully dressed. She had never seen the room before, and all its contents were unfamiliar. She lay there, trying to recall what had happened, but she found it impossible. One moment alone stood out in her memory: the recollection of the grey eyes of that Dr. Mabuse who had told her of tigers—eyes which had held her as with the clutch of a beast whose claws ran blood. She recalled something like a spring in the air, a hold that left her breathless, feeling as if the very heart were being torn from her body and she was sinking, sinking down into a gulf.

Suddenly a door opened; where, exactly, she did not know, for she felt rather than perceived it. She was expecting something, but her imagination flowed back upon herself and she waited.

After a time a voice spoke out of the semi-darkness: "You are awake. Would you like the light?"

It was a voice which seemed to the Countess at the first moment like the trump of doom, but in an instant this sensation left her and she felt incredulous. How came that voice into this mysterious obscurity? It was the very last she could have expected to hear. She shrank terrified within herself, and it seemed as if her whole body gradually stiffened. There was a sound in her throat, but she was not conscious of it. She stretched her hands in front of her as if warding off a danger. Then suddenly the room was flooded with light.

Dr. Mabuse closed the door and approached the sofa. He said: "The situation is exactly what I desired. I have brought you home!"

At these words the Countess regained control of herself. She rose from the sofa, though she felt faintness stealing over her. What did this man want with her?—but indeed she knew what he wanted. He was a tiger, intent on his prey. Nevertheless, she asked him, "What do you want?"

"I have just told you," he answered curtly.

"And now?"

"You will remain with me."

"I will not!" cried the Countess. "I will go and help my husband!" And at that moment she recollected clearly what had happened. Her husband had cheated at cards. Oh, merciful Heaven, she thought, how could such a thing have happened? She knew so well how utterly foreign to his nature such a thing would be. What misery, what despair, what depths of misfortune! And she herself had been with the woman who was an accomplice in Hull's murder, and had succumbed to her power. Everything seemed to swim before her eyes, and she saw her husband's unconscious act through a mist of blood.

She heard the voice of the man beside her, stern and threatening: "You will not? Have I asked you whether you will?"

He had not asked the tiger or the buffalo. Was he to ask a weak woman? Was he to ask *her*? She, too, was his prey. This idea filled her with a sort of voluptuous dread. She was the prey of the strongest man whom she had ever known. How could she defend herself? He had simply taken her. Were there men whose will was strong enough to give them possession of a woman if they never even touched her?

"How did I come here?" she asked.

"We have something more important than that to talk about," he answered in a cold, harsh voice that made her tremble. "How are you going to adapt yourself to the situation?"

"I will never adapt myself to it!" she cried; and it seemed as if instruments of torture were engraven on her brain.

"That is not the question!" answered the voice, falling like a stone, falling, lying, lying for thousands of years. "The question is, are you going to remain with me of your own free will or as my prisoner?"

The Countess, now fully alive to the force and compulsion which threatened her, strove to collect her wits. She looked, listened, considered, and slowly began to ask herself, "Shall it be cunning or resistance?" After a time she answered, "You cannot keep me as your prisoner in Munich."

Mabuse replied roughly, "How do you know that you are in Munich?"

"Have you run away with me?" she cried.

"I am not a gorilla."

"Who *are* you? What is your name?"

"Whatever you like to call me!"

"Then I shall call you a gorilla," she was about to retort angrily, but it seemed as if her tongue refused to utter the hateful name. It would not be expressed, and something within her appeared to change and soften the situation, to promise allurement in the distance and play around her fancy like busy little elves of night. Yet something in her conscience seemed to tell her that there could be no ease for her while her husband was cast down by misfortune and her own future was so uncertain, and she spoke defiantly, "What do you want with me?"

But the man looked at her long and steadily, and she felt as if her question floated away, minute and unconsidered as a trifle on the mighty ocean. The ocean was the breast of the man before her. There was no breast more mighty or powerful; it represented what her inmost being and her secret desires had yearned after. To rest upon it, to rest . . . as in the jungle . . .

Then, after he had looked at her in a silence fraught with meaning, the man spoke. "The human race is too contemptible and inferior to give its men and women such force as nature has provided for its other creations; that the one sex should see, know and belong to the other as naturally and inevitably as light belongs to day!"

"You mean to say," said the Countess hesitatingly, "that you love me, and that—is why you have brought me here!"

"I desire you, and that—for me—is stronger than love! You are here because there is no resisting my desires. You may reign as a queen, in this breast, and in my kingdom of Citopomar in Southern Brazil. A queen ruling the virgin forest, its savage beasts, savage and civilized human beings, valleys, rocks and heights. Who in this miserable continent can offer you more?"

"No one!" said the Countess, under the secret dominion of the dream which had so rapidly begun its twofold play in her spirit.

"You have decided, then, to remain of your own free will?" asked Mabuse.

The Countess once more realized her position. She shrank from him, and tried to shelter herself behind the ottoman. She closed her lips firmly, but at the same time she was torn by a conflict within; she desired to go, and at the same time she felt a yearning in some part of her being to remain and to submit.

He continued: "If it were like this: a man and a woman see each other for the first time, and in the first glance that they exchange they say to themselves, 'There is nothing left to me of what I was. Everything has vanished like a dissolving view, and thou, the only one, thou alone remainest. It is inconceivable that there should be a single heart-beat that does not belong to thee.' It is as if all the races in all the ages had united their powers in these two beings, instead of giving each individual a beggarly portion of it. What a puny creature is man, but if it were the other way with the race he would be the image of God and of creation!"

The Countess felt as if a sudden force was stretching her between two poles. She knew that she herself resembled both of them, and yet they were unlike each other. "Must I proceed from the one extreme to the other?" she asked herself, feeling very weary, "or can I remain hovering between them, calm and comfortable, in the warm rays of a sunshine that steals over me so pleasantly?"

There was always the inclination to follow the extraordinary and unusual, that she might feel wherein she was most akin to humanity, and yet most herself when surrounded by what did not belong to or affect her. And over her spirit there stole again a feeling as of Paradise, the scent of the Elysian Fields, the songs of enchanting sirens, and it seemed as if the limits of her physical nature were dissolved and, leaving her narrow horizon behind her, she floated as if in ether. "What is happening to me?" she thought, as, struggling with herself, she advanced yet nearer to the vision of Paradise which swam before her eyes.

The eyes of this strange, compelling being flooded her like a spring season of sunshine. He stood high as the clouds above her. The sunshine overpowered the earth, but the earth yielded itself gladly to its rays. Was that the secret of her nature too? she herself asked. The season, now wild and stormy, advanced like a monster endued with power, from beyond the horizon, over the forests, rivers, cities, mountains, looking neither to right nor left and penetrating to the very heart of things. "If this man overcomes me in such a way, fills my whole being, is that indeed Paradise? Is it for me completion, redemption, deliverance? Is this my second nature which I have never yet dared to follow?"

She desired to resist, but a subtle and enchanting feebleness stole over her, and she felt herself like a March field, dark and yielding. A jackdaw was screeching in it, but somewhere or other a thrush was singing behind her. And the screeching jackdaw and the singing thrush were snatching at a maggot, a living maggot in the bark of the tree, and even the bark of the tree seemed to be awaiting and expectant, and there was a murmuring sound in its cells. And the thrush mounted high into the air, singing triolets born of the spirit of the soil. . . .

Woman was the thrush, and at the same time she was the maggot. She yielded herself to the destroying force, and knew it not for the tumult in her blood. She was stirred in her inmost being, plunged into the depths and soared again, intangible as an air-bubble. . . . Above her rose the call of the man like the rustling sound of the summer, calling the sap to rise, to push forward the growth which should end in a glorious harvest.

XIV

MABUSE'S visit to Count Told duly took place. "Your neurosis is not by any means an unusual one," said the doctor. "It will be cured when you regain control of yourself, but it will become worse and finally be incurable if you don't succeed in doing that. It is a precursor of *dementia præcox*. For professional reasons I shall treat you in your own home, as I do all my patients. I make one condition, however. As long as you are undergoing treatment you must not leave the house or see anyone who recalls your former life."

Told was stupefied by the power and authority which this doctor assumed towards him. Timid and shrinking by nature, downcast by what had occurred, he did not venture to make any objection, and from the very first moment he stood in absolute awe of him.

When Mabuse left the villa, in which he had seen many things which revealed the life the Count and his wife had led, he said to himself, "He must be got rid of if she even mentions him again."

The doctor was in a highly excitable and savage state. The meeting with this man, who had so long called her his own, had fired his blood and inflamed him as if he had been a bull in the arena transfixed by a javelin. He unconsciously lowered

his head as if for attack, and his imagination ran riot, thirsting to satisfy his hate and revenge. It seemed to him as if a tumour had suddenly burst within him, scattering its evil and offensive discharge everywhere, and he allowed himself to bathe in its stream.

When he re-entered his house he went straight to the room in which the Countess was confined. It was in a secluded corner of the villa. The only light there was came from a round window in its arched and richly decorated dome.

The Countess arose as he came in. She was white as the sheets upon her bed. She went towards him, saying, "Something happened to me in the night—something of which I was wholly unconscious. What have you been doing to me?"

"Nothing but what you allowed me to do!"

Then the woman trembled so that she sank down to the ground, raising her glance to his like an animal that has been shot down, and crying in horror, "You devil! oh, you devil!"

"That name pleases me," said Mabuse. "I consider it flattering. It is, without your realizing it, a caress. Next time you will call me Lucifer, for I shall bring you light!"

The Countess, lying in a heap on the floor, broke into passionate sobs, crying in the midst of her anguish, "Where is my husband?"

Then she saw that at the question Mabuse made a gesture, so indifferent and trivial that she felt her painful anguished appeal was no more than a drop of dew vanishing in the sand, and as hopeless to look for. And her downcast broken heart asked itself whether this man could indeed be so powerful that everything went down before his will—that what she and others before her had been must be brought to nought?

Once again she must yield herself to the two-fold stream within. It bore the most secret and hitherto unsuspected currents along with it, and her tortured imagination gave them full play. Must not that which her blood sought to reveal to her be true? She could not separate herself from this new world of feeling. Resist and inveigh against it as she might, she could yet not tear it from her.

The man stood silent before her, and his silence seemed to threaten her. She thought that by a word of her own she could destroy this threatening attitude of his, but she found no power to say anything more than to repeat helplessly, "Where is my husband?" Then Mabuse, silently and roughly, turned away.

When he had left her, leaving behind nothing but the impression of his dominating will, she felt as if she missed something in the room. She would have preferred him to stand there still, and her sense of isolation passed all bounds, overwhelming her. A bottomless abyss opened before her, and phantom figures made appealing gestures. But she could not cast herself down; she hung on to one slender rootlet; she knew it to be the tiny remnant that remained to her of her former life. She wished too, that even this rootlet might be torn adrift, for she would rather have faced death in its entirety than hover over the void.

Mabuse went backwards and forwards in his room. He was like a caged beast, caught between

his rage for vengeance and lust of domination on the one hand and the resistance raised to the attainment of his goal on the other. That which baffled him was such a trifle, merely the memories binding a wife to the hours she has passed with her husband, either alone or in company, and because it was so slight an obstacle, the desire to remove and destroy it utterly possessed him with fury such as he had not known till now.

Spoerri entered. He was dressed as a soldier. "What is that for?" asked Mabuse morosely, but he did not wait for an answer, and asked about George's movements.

"He is at the villa in Schachen. He is very cautious, and does not go out."

"What is he doing there?"

"At night he helps to bring the store of cocaine under the summer-house into Switzerland. I have found something fresh which they are ready to take there. Ether."

"What is the ether for?"

"Folks are beginning to take it."

"Who? What folks? Where?"

"Our folks, in Switzerland!"

"*Your* folks; how many have you?"

"We can get it to the others!"

"That reminds me of the girls you were sending to Switzerland, to speed up the smuggling of salvarsan. I don't want to hear anything about business matters. You understand, nothing."

"I won't say any more about it."

"Perhaps, Spoerri, there'll be no need for that sort of thing any more!"

Then a hoarse cry was uttered by Spoerri. " Oh, Doctor, Citopomar ! Is it to be soon now? "

" We'll drink to it, Spoerri, we'll drink to it. I don't know. Let's drink to the shepherd boy with eighty-six thousand marks yearly income ! "

" Oh, what have I out of it? Do I not always invest it again in one or other of your enterprises, Doctor? "

" Because it brings you in ten per cent. more there than it would in an insurance society. Shall I have to use force, shepherd? Drink, I say ! "

Spoerri was the first to fall from his chair. He lay on the floor, disorder all around him, gazing sadly at his master. He lay there like a dog about to die, knowing that he could no longer protect his master's life.

Mabuse, tottering so that he was obliged to hold on to the edge of the table to save himself from falling, stuttered : " Spoerri, do you think there is anyone whose will is strong enough for him to kill someone else without even touching him? "

But Spoerri did not understand him. He looked up at his master with glassy eyes, stupid yet faithful, troubled and sick.

" *I* can ! and I shall do it, too ! . . . Sleep," he said suddenly, and rising, he spurned the other with his foot. He took a few steps forward, having to seek support. Then he pulled himself together, and his will-power was held as it were within an iron vice. Rigidly upright, without a sign of swaying, inflamed with drink and in a state of exaltation, he went into the room the Countess occupied and remained with her without saying a word. And from that hour of humiliation this woman, too, acknowledged his supremacy. She forgot her past, forgot her very self, and submitted willingly to her master.

During the night Mabuse started for Lake Constance. Just as he was approaching the villa at Schachen, having extinguished his lights, he narrowly missed a collision with the engine of the steam-roller which was standing in the road a few yards from the garden entrance. It was directly in front of him when he applied his brakes, and he therefore did not drive up to the house, but continued along the road for another kilometre, then left the car standing and went back to the house by the shore-path.

" Why did you not tell me the steam-roller was here? " he asked George imperiously. " Even a match-box lying out in the street might betray us. Go and fetch the car, quickly ! It is on the high-road near Wasserburg. Put it away and come straight back here."

Next morning the telephone bell woke Wenk from his sleep. " News from the steam-roller," he heard, and was at once wide-awake.

" Yes, yes ; please go on."

" Last night about two o'clock a car arrived, and pulled up directly in front of our engine, then drove on again. As it was driving without lights, I ordered Schmied to follow on a bicycle. He found it about a kilometre further on, left alone by the roadside, and came back at once to report. I stole into the garden of the villa, but the dog began barking and I went outside round the shore. I saw a man come from the direction of the lake and go into the house. When Schmied and I went back to find the car it had vanished. There is nothing to be noticed this morning!"

"Thanks. You can expect me there to-day."

An hour before this conversation took place on the telephone, while still dark, Mabuse left the villa. He was wearing women's clothes and was rowed across to Nonnenhorn. A motor-boat approached, and in it was a fisherman returning from a smuggling expedition. Mabuse accosted him, but the man said he was in a hurry, for he must take his fish home. Then Mabuse at one bound sprang into his boat, overpowered him, threw him down and gagged him, and then transferred him to the rowing-boat. He took off his female garments, beneath which he was dressed as a fisherman, and making a wide detour, he returned to shore and went to the farm where in a barn the car was concealed. George was lying in it asleep.

After a long conversation with George, Mabuse turned and drove back into Würtemberg, while George returned to Schachen.

Mabuse wanted to get to Stuttgart. His agents there had telephoned the previous day that a patient wanted to consult him. That meant that they had got hold of a rich man worth plucking.

While Mabuse was sitting at the gaming-table that evening, he had a sudden vision of the steam-roller as it appeared directly in front of him when he applied his brakes. The huge machine was outlined in the darkness, and it seemed as if it were about to fall upon him, and to his fancy it took on a strange shape, finally revealing the features of the State Attorney. As he recalled it, it seemed to stand forth like some antediluvian monster, bearing Wenk's face, about to fall upon and crush him. Mabuse felt vaguely uneasy, and he suddenly left the gaming-table, where he was losing, and drove back in the night to Munich. On the way this action of his seemed ridiculous, and he felt as if his impulse had been unwarranted. "My desire for that woman will conquer any fear of that accursed lawyer," he thought, but yet Wenk seemed to stand in his way, more powerful than ever. Why was he still there? Had Mabuse's order not been distinct enough? If not, he would repeat it!

When once again in his house at Munich he went straight to bed. He controlled his desire to go to the Countess, and fell fast asleep at once.

When the road-menders in Schachen returned to work after their midday rest, a man who had come out of the inn attached himself to their party, saying that he wanted to speak to the overseer. Was it likely he could find a job? he asked them.

"You can have mine this minute, if you'll pay for it well," said one jokingly, but the man said that he only wanted the work so that he could get some pay himself. "That's another matter," laughed the navvy. "There's the overseer standing there."

The man went towards him, speaking in a low tone, and unobtrusively drew him somewhat away from the rest. Yes, he could possibly get a job, said the overseer, who was really a police inspector ; let him show his papers.

These the man brought out, saying, " Do not show yourself surprised, inspector. Look as if you were reading the papers through, and take me on to help the stoker on the engine. He is Sergeant Schmied, isn't he? "

" Yes, sir. . . . Well, all right, I'll take you on," said the inspector aloud. " We can give you some work. Come this way. Schmied," he called out. He explained to Schmied in an undertone that the State Attorney was going to spend the day on the engine as stoker's assistant.

" What have you noticed now? " asked Wenk of Schmied, as the road engine moved backwards and forwards.

" While you were on the way, the inspector telephoned to you, but you had already started. Things seem very strange here. We saw the man go to the villa that night, and we thought he must be the one who had left the car standing in the road, but yet it doesn't seem to tally with the rest, for when we came back to the car it had disappeared. Early this morning there was a woman in a rowing-boat on the lake near the villa, but we could not be sure whether she actually came from there. An hour later, Poldinger, the man we are watching, came from the high-road and went into the house ; but we had never seen him leave it, and that is very curious."

" You have no idea whether the villa has some unknown exit? "

" No, for hitherto our observations of Poldringer all tally. He used to return the same way he went out. He scarcely ever leaves the place, not once in three days."

" Is there no way of getting into the villa? "

" Not without exciting attention. I see that by the way tramps are turned away. They have a well-trained bloodhound there. . . . It would not be possible to effect a secret entrance."

" Is Poldringer still there? "

" Yes ; I saw him at a window just now."

" Had the car a number-plate? "

" Yes, the Constance district ; here is the number."

" That, of course, is a false one. It came from the Lindau direction, I think you said? "

" Yes, sir. I telephoned the number to Friedrichshafen, Ravensburg, Lindau, Wangen and Constance. From Constance they told me that the number I gave belonged to a car in use by the Sanitary Commissioners which never left Constance."

" Isn't it possible that the car had been expected at the villa, but did not stop at it, either because they wanted to use it again shortly or because something had made them a bit suspicious—the steam-roller, for example? . . . and therefore Poldringer was told to wait for the car in the street and take it to some place of concealment? During that time the man who had brought it here arrived at the villa. He is either still there with Poldringer or else he was the woman in the rowing-boat, and he has driven to the place where the car is. We must find out where they keep it hidden."

" We often hear the sound of a motor-boat at night not far from the shore, but we are not able to keep an eye on it."

"I shall sleep in the trolly with you to-night, and we will stop the roller half a kilometre further away from the house. Is there any suitable place to hide in near the house?"

"Yes."

"Then we'll go together. Is that settled? All right, then; now I'm going to learn how to lay out the stones. Hitherto, I've only laid out criminals!" laughed Wenk.

"Yes, your honour," said Schmied cheerily, as he released the throttle and started the engine. "Will your honour please to stoke up!" And Wenk heaped more coal into its glowing maw.

"Up to now your honour has never fired an engine, only criminals!" he continued, carrying on Wenk's joke.

"Yes, but not enough of those, as you see at the villa, my good Schmied," answered the lawyer. "However, I hope with your help . . ."

"We shall catch them all right," said Schmied eagerly.

"If we don't overreach ourselves, for I think we are dealing at the moment with the most dangerous and daring gang in Europe. You know that we have ascertained so far that it is a case of card-sharping, murder, terrorization, and all of it done by the help of a gang."

"Yes, indeed," said Schmied.

As they were leaving the trolly that evening Schmied whispered: "I should like to draw your attention to something, sir. Every evening I go by as if I were taking a little rest after the day's

work, and I light up my pipe. Just at the side there, you see, we are getting to a little door. Whenever anyone goes by, the dog begins barking, and I couldn't help thinking there was some reason for it, but one can't find it out from the street. You see now, I am just close to it, and while I am going by I fasten . . . (just listen to the dog now!) a thread across the door. Anybody who opens it would break the thread, but he would not notice it when going through. In this way I can keep watch over the door, even when it is not actually in view. Then I can tell whether anyone has gone through the gate in the dark. In the morning I go and look at it first thing, and take the thread away."

"Is it there already?"

"I have just fastened it there."

"Then you did it very smartly, for I did not notice anything," said Wenk, praising him.

"Let us go back. It really is a side-entrance to the other villa."

"Do you know who is living there?"

"For the last thirty years an old maid has been living there. There certainly is no connection between the two villas."

They strolled back along the road.

"If you would like to go to sleep, Schmied, I have no objection. I know what I've to look out for now."

"Well, I really should be glad to, sir, for last night I got no sleep, and I must be out there again before four o'clock."

"I understand. Well then, good night. . . ."

Wenk continued his patrol throughout the whole of the spring night, but nothing happened, and he noticed nothing out of the common. Next morning he repaired to the hotel at Lindau, the address of which he had notified before leaving Munich. The director told him he had been rung up from Munich, and his man wanted him to know that Count Told most earnestly desired to speak to him as soon as possible. The call had come from his home at Munich. He seemed to be greatly agitated, and begged the man to telephone the message on.

Wenk returned to Munich and rang up the Count, but an unfamiliar voice informed him that the Count had started on a journey.

" Did he leave no message for me? " said Wenk.

" No."

" Where has he gone? "

" He left no address. Please ring off."

Wenk was thoroughly perplexed.

XV

THAT same morning Mabuse had visited Told. " You are not so well, I can see," said he to him. " Your pupils are very much dilated."

" Is that a sign . . . ? " said Told hesitatingly.

" Yes. Don't talk about your state ; put it entirely out of your head. Where is your wife? "

The startled Count could not venture on an answer.

" Your wife did not want to live with you any more—never any more ! " went on the Doctor harshly. " That is so, isn't it? You must destroy the past, break off all relation to it. Call your man here ! "

Told rang, and the man came. The Count, with a gesture, referred him to the doctor.

" Has anybody telephoned? "

" No, Doctor."

" Has anyone rung up from here? "

" I did," answered Told.

" Whom? "

" Dr. von Wenk."

" Why? "

" I wanted to speak to him."

" What did you want to say? "

The embarrassed Count answered, " Only . . .

to speak . . . to speak to some human being or other!"

"Is your servant a bullock, then, or am I one?" asked Mabuse harshly. "You can talk to me if you want to. What crazy idea has got into your head?"

The Count turned his head away; he no longer had the courage to face his doctor. . . . "Is he going to cure me?" he asked himself. Then he looked up at him timidly and irresolutely. "You are no human being: you are a devil!" was the secret cry of his heart, but these fierce thoughts soon left him, and he felt suddenly sleepy. "I am always so tired!" he exclaimed.

"Tell your man now, in my presence, to refuse all visitors or anyone who telephones. He must say, 'The Count has gone on a journey. He left no address. Please ring off.'"

Slowly and mechanically Told repeated the order, and the man bowed and withdrew.

"I am really not sure whether I shall go on with your case," said Mabuse. But Told hardly heeded him; he seemed to feel a slow poison stealing into his veins.

"You are thirsty!" said Mabuse, suddenly.

"Yes, I am," whispered the Count.

"You are to drink a mixture of brandy and Tokay, as much as you like. Take good long draughts—the brandy will do you good. You must forget everything in your past, your wife as well. When you are convinced that you have succeeded in doing that, you are on the road to recovery. You must destroy the past, you understand. The alcohol will help you there."

"Destroy the past," stammered the Count, as if sinking into a bog that threatened to engulf him, "destroy . . . the . . . past . . ."

"In two years' time you can think about resuming your ordinary life again. In what time?" he broke off suddenly. "What time did I say?" he thundered.

The Count aroused himself from his lethargy. Horrified at the length of time involved, he answered in a low tone, "Two years."

"Do you know that your wife wants to put you into a lunatic asylum? She is getting the State Attorney, Wenk, to help her. Was not that the man who rang you up? . . . I am coming again to-morrow."

The Count remained alone, dejected and humiliated. It seemed as if elephants were trampling out his brains, that his spirit was a prey to crocodiles and he was covered with mud and slime. "The whole world has forsaken me," he murmured. The pictures he had collected around him seemed to be celebrating orgies on the walls. He could no longer understand how it was they could ever have pleased him, nor why he had endured them so long. He took a hunting-knife and slit every one of them from top to bottom, hacking at their frames. When he had done it, he sprang back in horror. He held his head in his hands, groaning, "Oh God, am I really mad?"

He began drinking brandy, and he drank it out of a claret tumbler. When he had had three glasses he was intoxicated. Then it seemed as if the doctor had left something behind him and that this lay in front of him. He did not know what it was, but he tried to grasp it, and then suddenly it had jumped to his head. It seemed like a wedge fastened there, fitting tightly between the two halves of the brain. Fear seized upon him and tore his courage to shreds. "Doctor, Doctor," he shouted, and he heard his voice re-echo in the empty rooms. The world was so wide, yet he was alone. And then he became unconscious.

Karstens succumbed to his wounds, and again the public imagination busied itself with the death of a second victim. Wenk found himself in a difficulty and decided one day to make a final appeal to the dancer. He went to her cell.

"I am not going to speak to you," said Cara when she perceived him.

Wenk took no notice, and said in a troubled tone, his hopes disappearing: "Do you know that the beautiful lady who was always looking on at the play at Schramm's has disappeared?"

"Not the one you sent to me in prison?" answered the dancer instantly.

"Yes," said Wenk, and it was not till he had uttered the word that he perceived the significance of this admission. It was all very mysterious. Had the Countess revealed her errand to Cara, and was she in league with the gamblers? It seemed incredible, but yet how strange it was that Cara, who would not at first speak to him, at once gave him her attention when he mentioned the Countess. Wenk did not want Cara to think that he was astonished at this, and went on talking, while he was trying to consider how he could best arrive at the secret; but he did not stop to reflect upon the ideas that came uppermost. In the course of the conversation he hazarded a conjecture that had often occurred to him when he thought of Cara's connection with the criminal, but which he had never mentioned till now. He said, "You are sacrificing yourself for this criminal because you could not make up your mind to part from him."

Then Cara sprang up, staring at Wenk as if convulsed. He looked her right in the eyes, and noticed that an expression of overwhelming horror stood in them, and was clearly written upon her distorted features.

"Well?" he asked, encouraged and hopeful.

But Cara remained as if frozen in her stony attitude.

Then he ventured further. "If we came to some agreement, I could make proposals that would be to your advantage."

Slowly the dancer recovered from the horror that had seized upon her. For the last three years, ever since Mabuse had repulsed her, her life had been a story of self-sacrificing martyrdom and devoted adherence to the man who had wrought her ruin and driven her to crime. Not for a single instant had she thought of betraying him, of refusing her allegiance. Indelibly stamped upon her whole nature like the brand of a slave was the feeling that mastery and might such as his could never be contested. And now, through Wenk's words, she beheld this man whom she adored threatened with danger. What did the State Attorney know, and how had he obtained his knowledge? Had the Countess betrayed her after all? Slowly she evolved a plan by which to discover how much the lawyer knew. She might possibly convey a warning to Dr. Mabuse, and at the thought her blood was fired and the delicious sensation of feeling herself his deliverer, and perhaps, too, regaining the ascendancy she had lost, stole over her. No, it could not be, she dared not even conceive of it ; to save him from danger would be enough for her, to know him secure would be bliss. Finally she said, " Since you seem to be better informed than I imagined, I will speak, but you must give me two days to think it over."

The dancer had learnt from the warder that someone had been inquiring about her, and from the description given she believed it to be Spoerri. She would therefore have an opportunity of telling him about her interview with Wenk and warning him of what might occur.

" Very well," said Wenk, relieved. Then he thought he would clinch the matter, and as his previous supposition seemed to have hit the mark, he imagined it a favourable opportunity to inflame her imagination still further, so he said, " I am trying to get on the track of the Countess ; she seems to be in hiding with your friend."

He was so ashamed of these words, however, that he blushed as he uttered them, recalling with painful intensity his few meetings with the missing lady—meetings which had bound him so closely to her. But the effect of his words on the dancer was wholly unexpected. She fell back on her pallet, sobbed aloud, tried to speak, but could utter no word, and then she clenched her fists and raised them despairingly to her brow.

Wenk went off quickly, thinking it best not to

disturb this attitude of mind but to let her yield wholly to its influence. As he opened the door a man stumbled against it, but it was only the warder, who had come, as he said, to look at the prisoner as his duty was just at this time. " All right," said Wenk, and he made his way out.

Shortly afterwards the following things occurred. Near Hengnau, on the borders of Würtemberg, a man was detained and arrested as he was about to drive cattle to Würtemberg. At first he pretended to be dumb, but afterwards he raged furiously at his capture. The examining counsel, in order to intimidate him, said one day, " You had better confess before the new law is passed. If you are tried before then you may get off lightly, but later on it may cost you your head."

" What new law is that? " asked the man.

" The crime of endangering the food distribution is punishable with death."

" What sort of death? "

" Probably hanging ! "

" And if I am convicted before that is passed? "

" You won't get more than a year's imprisonment at the most."

Then he suddenly confessed, and his confession opened many doors. He confessed all that he had been doing for years and gave the names of all the profiteers known to him. Many arrests were the result. Every day afforded fresh opportunities, and finally one day the name of the man whom Mabuse had dismissed on the highroad to Lindau —Pesch—was mentioned.

Pesch was arrested, and his first night in prison was spent at Wangen, which was his native place. When the warder entered his cell next morning, the prisoner had disappeared. A few hours later a telephone message came to the Wangen police. In a wood on the highroad to Lindau a man was lying dead. It was undoubtedly a case of murder.

An inquiry took place on the spot. The dead man was Pesch. He had been stabbed, and as they raised his body they saw on the large white stone on which it had rested certain signs which had been written in blood. The very same day experts deciphered these signs. They stood for "Villa Elise."

The mayors in the neighbouring districts were asked whether they knew a villa bearing this name, and thus it was soon ascertained that at Schachen there was a villa so called, and it was under police surveillance.

Wenk was at once informed, and he drove to Lindau. The two detectives who were in charge of the steam-roller had ascertained that Poldringer had left Schachen on a bicycle the very day that Pesch was imprisoned, and had not returned until three o'clock the next morning.

Then Wenk arranged that two motor-boats should be stationed on the lake. They were made to appear as if they were Customs' official boats, and were provided with searchlights.

Another human life had been sacrificed, but this fresh murder had revealed something more far-reaching and dangerous than had yet been suspected. It was certain that the gang was taking part in this profiteering movement also, and it became clear that its leader had created an entire

yet invisible State to carry on his purposes and give effect to the deeds his will imposed on his fellows.

Pesch left a wife and five children, and since the family breadwinner was gone, they were in absolute danger of starving. Then Wenk sought out Edgar Hull's father, to obtain help for them, and the idea suddenly occurred to him, "Why not establish an educational institution, a real home-school for the children of criminals, taking them in under an assumed name? Perhaps that would be a good way to lay out your money. The children, who so often inherit the parents' characteristics, could be watched over and perhaps influenced for good in their early years. If it were not possible to eradicate their vices, at least they could be kept apart from their fellows and removed before they have a chance of harming them. In this way a large proportion of the criminal class might be rendered harmless and many people would be saved. . . ."

"I will do it," said Hull, "and I am grateful to you for the suggestion."

The next evening Wenk was walking from the Marstall to the Maximilianstrasse, and as he passed the Four Seasons Hall he thought he saw someone he knew in the crowd in front of him struggling to gain an entrance; but he could not recall who it was, and went straight ahead. As he walked on he strove to remember whose back and shoulders it was that had seemed so familiar, but he could not place the individual. Soon afterwards he came to an advertisement window in which the scheme of a popular lottery was displayed. The large letters could be seen through the dusty pane, and the words "Lucky Chance!" stood out. These words at once gave Wenk the clue he had been seeking. The back he had noticed belonged to the sandy-bearded gambler.

He was astounded at the discovery. He had been seeking this man for many days and nights all over Germany, and here he was, and he had passed so close by him that he could have touched him on the shoulder. He turned round at once, went back to the hall and at the entrance he read a notice stating that Dr. Mabuse was giving a lecture, with experiments, there that evening.

He immediately ordered one of the constables standing outside to fetch six plain-clothes men and tell them to close all the exits without exciting any attention, and when the detectives were placed, he entered the hall. It was an easy one to search, and he went from row to row, while the lecturer was engaged in preparing his experiments. Wenk took up a position here and there, and looked at the folks one after another. But nowhere did he find the owner of the back which was so impressed on his mind.

He noticed some of his acquaintance. There was Privy Councillor Wendel sitting in the front row, and a legal colleague of his was there with his wife and grown-up daughter, but he behaved as if he saw nobody and continued his eager search. It was all in vain, however. Then he took a sudden resolve, went outside again, and gave the detectives the following orders. All the exits were to be locked except one. Two detectives

were to enter the hall, and one of them was to go on to the platform at once and request the audience to leave the hall quietly, one by one. Both were to see that there was no one left behind. The four others were to stand at the folding doors and let the people pass through singly, only one half of the door being opened.

Wenk himself would stand by the door, and if he gave any order for arrest, two of the detectives would at once take the man aside and handcuff him. The two others would then only have to take care that no one got near the man arrested. All were to have their service revolvers ready for use. There was great excitement in the hall when the announcement was made, and several cries of disapproval of the order were heard. The detective strove to pacify the disappointed audience.

Mabuse's first thought, when he heard the Secret Service agent's announcement, was a doubt whether he should have ventured on this public appearance, but he soon dismissed the troublesome idea. Yes, he had been right, for it provided him, in concentrated form, with the nourishment upon which his mind battened. With such hypnotic powers as he possessed he must always be in relation with a larger and unknown public. To feel his power over the narrow circle to which his professional duties bound him, the members of which were known to him, was not enough for his insatiable ambition. His sphere must know no limits, and with these weird and mysterious gifts of his he could exploit the triviality and credulity of his fellows and at the same time give full play to his hatred and his lust for domination.

Upon such a stage as this he felt as if born anew. It was here that he had inaugurated his reign of power, when the war sent him from his South Sea plantations back to his home, a ruined man, and this domination of his he could not renounce. While these thoughts were passing through his mind he went to the detective and asked what had happened. "You must inquire of the State Attorney, sir," said the man. "Dr. von Wenk is just outside."

Mabuse turned pale and walked away, going rapidly towards the Privy Councillor, whom he saw still sitting in the front row. As he went, he felt in his pocket to make sure that his revolver was safe, and sensations of hatred and defiance went through his whole body, fastening as it were like a brand upon his mental image of Wenk.

"First of all you, and then . . ." he said to himself, but he was already smiling in the Councillor's face.

"Your hypnotic powers," said the latter, "seem to be giving the State Attorney some trouble!"

"Is that Dr. Wenk?" said Mabuse, drawing back as if astonished.

"I saw him just now going from seat to seat and fixing an eagle eye on everybody here, as if to pierce through coat, waistcoat and shirt to reach a guilt-burdened conscience. He does not seem to have found his man, however."

Mabuse's breast heaved, inflated at the thought of his success. He felt like a horse in sight of its manger after a long and weary road. Although he clearly understood what the words implied, he nevertheless asked the Councillor, "How do you know that?"

"It is quite simple, for if he had found his man, he would have let one of the detectives take him out without disturbing your lecture."

"That is true," said Mabuse. "Let us go."

He pressed towards the door, taking the Councillor with him. He was thoroughly on the alert, looking behind him to see that he did not lose touch with Wendel, and also ahead, where lay the danger he wished to avoid. Whenever any movement threatened to separate him from the elderly savant, he used all the cunning at his command to get near him again. It was above all essential not to leave the hall exposed to Wenk's gaze as a solitary individual. The Councillor, who was old and well known, must help him to throw the hound off the scent. He was aged, however, and could not hurry; but Mabuse dared not be the last one to leave, closely eyed as he would be by a disappointed man who had not found the quarry he sought. There were still some others behind him, to whose party he might attach himself, so that he need not be the last.

One thing was certain. It was he, and none other, whom the State Attorney was seeking, but Wenk did not know that Mabuse was his quarry, or he would have had him arrested on the platform. How had he got upon the track? Was it a mere guess that had started him off? Was there treachery in it? No; *he* would never be betrayed. Could Wenk have recognized him, one of those evenings at the gaming-table? No; it was impossible, his disguises were too perfect for that, so . . .

Then a hand touched his, and Mabuse looked into Spoerri's inquiring eyes, and saw beside him another man of his bodyguard, and he immediately looked away again unconcernedly. Spoerri and his accomplice were pressing towards the exit in front of him. Mabuse went on thinking, and came to the conclusion that mere chance had put Wenk on this track, some faint resemblance or recollection, some movement or action. . . . In any case, Wenk must see as little of him as possible, and since his back would be exposed to him longer than any other part, he put his arms through the sleeves of his overcoat and thus altered his appearance.

And now he had reached the exit with the Privy Councillor. He quickly pushed him in front, following closely on his heels. At the moment when Wendel stepped to the door, Wenk was ordering a detective to tell two men who were lingering on the stairs to move on. Mabuse heard the man say, "Shall I arrest them?" Then he looked ahead and saw that the order referred to Spoerri and his subordinate. Mabuse sought to catch his eye ; he took his pocket-handkerchief out with a flourish and blew his nose loudly. Spoerri saw it and understood, and at once withdrew with his companion.

Mabuse saw Wenk shaking hands with the Councillor. Then it was his turn to come forward, and Wendel introduced "Dr. Mabuse." Without taking his eyes off the door, through which the light from the hall was now streaming, Wenk shook hands with Mabuse, saying courteously, "You won't be annoyed with me for carrying out my duty, I hope, Doctor?"

Mabuse answered with affected friendliness, his hand on the revolver in his pocket, "Certainly not; I must naturally take the second place when it is a question of the good of the community, whom you are endeavouring to rid of a criminal."

He had already passed on. Wenk nodded to him, but did not look round again, as his gaze was still fastened on the door.

The Privy Councillor took Mabuse's arm going downstairs. Mabuse accompanied him to the gentlemen's cloakroom and then took his leave. One of his cars was waiting in the Maximilianstrasse, and right and left of him at the entrance to the *foyer* his people were standing in readiness for anything that might happen. Spoerri had taken up his position at the main door of the hall, to keep watch upon the stairs; then he went out behind Mabuse, and the others, who were in small detached groups, always ready to close up at a word, followed them. It was not until Mabuse had taken his seat in the car and driven off that they dispersed, each going a separate way.

Driving homeward, Mabuse reflected that he had committed one act of folly. He ought at any rate to have asked when he would be allowed to give his experiments. This fact depressed him, and he felt that he had failed in some way. He would never have done anything so foolish formerly, and the idea occurred to him that perhaps his power was on the decline, and that it was now time for Citopomar.

Then suddenly he shouted aloud, "No! this is due to that woman! Wenk wants to hang me, the woman makes me feel old, and she is delivering me over to the gallows." Why should this woman, young and beautiful as she was, who had abandoned herself to her lot with despairing fatalism, make him feel old? Her abandonment of herself was like wine to him, and this idea started another train of thought. He was in conflict with himself. There was no enjoyment in the thought that he had escaped a great danger, and in the midst of his uneasy reflections he had a sudden breathless conviction that she made him feel old because he loved her. Then he felt a hatred of himself, gathering into one mighty heap all the fierce and bitter hatred he had cherished for others and pouring it out on himself. So strongly did he suffer from the burden of these chaotic feelings that his brain grew giddy. But now he had reached his house.

All the wrinkles in his face were deepened and intensified, but it was his eyes that looked most dreadful, and the Countess trembled as he entered her room. No longer were they of the steely grey of an agate, but rather seemed shot with rays of copper colour.

"What has happened?" she asked.

Then he told her something quite different from that which he had meant to tell her.

"Do you know who I am?" he asked, and his tone was one of frenzied delirium. "I am a werwolf; I suck man's blood. Every day my hatred burns up all the blood in my veins, and every night I fill them again by sucking the blood of some human being. If men caught me, they would tear me into little bits. I will bite through your white throat, you tormenting witch!"

The Countess started as if stung, and, mad with pain and torture, cried aloud, "Kill me then! What could be better than death?"

"But I love you!" cried the voice of the man beside her, who seemed to be possessed by devils.

The woman hid her face in her hands. It was the first time she had heard such a confession from that imperious mouth, and it stirred her to the depths of her nature. Her free spirit had been snatched from the world and confined in a fortress whence there was no escape. Her life was a dead thing, but the blood within her raged in dread and mysterious tumult, inflamed and excited by the power of this man. Her dead soul was afire, and there was nothing left to consume: whence then came this flame?

Mabuse left the Countess without saying another word. "I have told her enough," he said to himself. He threw himself down on his bed, but could not sleep. He felt as if something new had come into his life, till then so steady and changeless, as if the danger which he had always been able to grasp and bring to nought had eluded him and were sinking into the icy black gulf in whose depths his life and actions were grounded. For hours he tried to grapple with this new force and subordinate it to his will, but evermore it seemed to evade him.

Then he returned to the Countess, lying fully dressed and sleepless on her bed, and he said, "We must talk matters out. Our fates are entwined, and we must go through life together. From some source or other of my existence my blood has received something which revolts against a peaceful and well-ordered life, and will not permit to others a power above its own. Thus it is that I have become, as it were, the chief of a robber horde. I have known but two states: the desire to dominate and the necessity to hate! But now you have come upon the scene. At first I thought that your spirit would be consumed in the twin flames that inspire mine, but it is not so. Hundreds have been consumed by them, but you seem to feed upon them, and they nourish you. When I am intoxicated, not forgetting my hatred, but putting it on one side for the time being, because there are more beautiful things, I often name to you one name—Citopomar. Citopomar is not the outcome of a disordered fancy, the result of a fit of intoxication. It is a virgin forest in Brazil, far in the interior. It is being cultivated for me. All the money I can wring from this petty community of miserable wretches on this side of the world is being employed there. There is my country, the land in which I shall end my days. First of all, I thought of myself there with my harem. Now I know it is there I shall be with *you*. It is a forty days' journey to the nearest human dwelling, and the human beings there could not endure life here, but they cannot be reached, for the Botocudos would not let anyone pass. It is even possible that my

agents, who have been carrying out my plans, may have deceived me, and that when we arrive there we may find there is no kingdom of Citopomar. But no one can deceive me about *you*!

"My professional life here has extended to ever-widening circles, and I could live a good deal longer under the protection of the State and in well-ordered society. To-day, however, I had proof that folks are on my track, and henceforth I must act cautiously. A ship is being built for me in Genoa. I do not travel by strange ships, but sail under my own flag. The ship is to be ready on the 1st of June, and on that night we will embark. Between this and then, however, there is nearly two months to pass. I cannot rest, and until the very night of our departure I shall still be a robber chief.

"We will be wary. You must go to another house. It is quite as well guarded as this one, but if they should discover this one, they will catch you. I am probably about to leave the place, and at midnight to-morrow you will depart. Spoerri will take you to the new home."

As incapable of resistance as of mental participation in his schemes, consumed in the devouring flames of this man's all-powerful domination, the Countess endured his conversation and took his orders. Her fate lay in his hands.

XVI

AT nine o'clock next morning Mabuse was at Count Told's villa. As he was now endeavouring to hold himself ready for flight at any moment, he wanted to bring this matter of the Count to an end.

He had desired him to drink, and for some days now Told had been drinking, in passionate abandonment. Mabuse looked at him in silence. When Told was intoxicated he said to him, "You are a person without the slightest power of resistance. Where is your razor?"

In a thick voice Told answered that it was on the washstand.

"Is it sharp?" said Mabuse with a peculiar intonation. "Sharp enough?" he repeated with an emphasis so marked that it seemed as if he wanted to hammer an idea into the Count's head.

Mabuse took it up, seized a sheet of paper and made a sharp clean cut in it. Then he said threateningly, "Yes, it is sharp enough." Thereupon he laid the razor aside, but did not return it to its case. He called the servant in, saying to him, "The Count's condition is not so good as it was. He is drinking brandy with his Tokay. I have no objection to a little light Burgundy, but these strong spirits are not to be allowed.

You must take away what is left in the bottle. Your master will . . . now . . . go . . . to sleep!" He uttered the last words in a long-drawn-out, menacing tone. Then he went out of the room in front of the footman, and left the house.

Half an hour later, Count Told, not knowing what he was doing, cut his throat from ear to ear. He had a feeling as if something in his throat were preventing him from enjoying some great happiness, and he wanted to remove the hindrance.

At two o'clock a message came from Mabuse to ask how the Count was getting on. The footman said he was asleep, but he would go and look at him to make sure. Then he found him bathed in blood, where he had fallen from his arm-chair to the ground, his body now cold in death. The doctor's messenger came into the room, looked at the corpse, and went back to report to his master.

The man-servant did not know what to do. Since none of the Count's relatives were in the neighbourhood and he did not know the Countess's address, he felt he must inform the police first of all. But then, again, he was not sure which was the right office to go to to give such information, and it occurred to him that the State Attorney, Herr von Wenk, was an acquaintance of his master's and had asked after him recently, so he drove to Munich, sought out the lawyer, and told his story.

"Was the Count at home then all the time?" asked Wenk.

"Yes, sir, all the time."

"Then why did you tell me on the telephone that the Count had gone on a journey?"

"The doctor told me that on account of my master's state no one was to be allowed to see him, and I must tell anybody who inquired that he had gone away. My master saw nobody but his doctor."

"What was the doctor's name?"

"I never heard his name, sir. I don't know it."

Then Wenk remembered that Privy Councillor Wendel had given him a letter to Dr. Mabuse, and that the Count had used Wenk's own telephone to make an appointment with this doctor.

Wenk trembled as, struck by the horror of a strange suspicion, he described to the footman the figure of Dr. Mabuse as he had seen it recently at the Four Seasons Hall. He spoke of him as a tall man, stooping slightly, without beard or moustache, with a broad face and big nose and large grey eyes. When the man said, "Yes, he looked exactly like that," Wenk grew pale as death. In a moment all the disconnected impressions, hazy ideas, vague recollections, half-defined thoughts and images which had been partially obliterated, but not altogether lost, gathered together in his mind. When Wenk had the hall emptied, why had Dr. Mabuse not asked the reason for this measure? Why had he not inquired whether he could continue his experiments at another time? Why had Wenk, who had seen a man whose back he had recognized go into the hall, not found him again inside? Why had the two men who would not obey the

detective's order to move on, suddenly done as they were told immediately Mabuse appeared? Why had Mabuse's eyes, in the brief moment he had looked into them, affected him so powerfully, as if they sought to read something that lay hidden in his very soul and was now almost forgotten?

He dismissed Count Told's servant, and then tried to find Dr. Mabuse's number in the telephone book, but it was not given there. Yet Mabuse had a telephone, for the Count had rung him up from this very house. The Privy Councillor knew the number.

When Wenk, having obtained the telephone number from Herr Wendel, gave it, there was no reply. Ringing up the exchange, he was told that the telephone had been disconnected. He asked who had had it three weeks before, but this could not be ascertained at once.

Again Wenk rang up the Councillor. Dr. Mabuse had changed his number; did he happen to know his address? Wendel could give no information. He only knew the telephone number, and spoke to him on the phone. Wenk then asked at the Police Registry Office for Dr. Mabuse's address, but the name was not to be found anywhere among the arrivals in Munich, and when, at the Municipal Registry, all the old telephone books were searched to find Mabuse, he was again unsuccessful.

Thereupon Wenk repaired to the manager of the telephone exchange in order to make a more thorough search. The manager took him to the inquiry-room, where two young women were employed, and he asked them to look again for the number he had telephoned about.

"What were you wanting?" asked the elder of the two, and Wenk explained that he was seeking the address of a Dr. Mabuse, who three weeks before had a telephone number that did not appear in the directory.

The girl said she could not find it anywhere, whereupon Wenk returned to the manager with this information. He declared this was something quite unheard of, and himself accompanied Wenk to the inquiry office. He, too, made a search with the clerks, but could find nothing. While the manager was looking through the lists without success, an idea occurred to Wenk, and when he was informed that no one of the name of Mabuse had been entered on the list at all for the last year, he asked the manager for the telephone number and address of a man named Poldringer. As he uttered this name he saw the elder girl start and then immediately recover herself, but an instant later she told him rudely that there were ever so many Poldringers in Munich, and without the Christian name and the exact address she could not furnish any information.

Then Wenk turned to the manager, saying politely, "I am sorry to have to put you to some inconvenience, but I must take both these ladies into custody!"

He at once took up a position between the girls and the telephone. "Be so good as to sit down on these chairs till the detectives arrive; you here, and your companion there!" The elder of the girls turned as white as a sheet. The other blushed, and then began to cry. Wenk said, turning to her, "It is only a formality. If you behave properly, this matter can be carried through without exciting notice, and it is probable that it will not be long before the mystery is cleared up." Then he rang up the Criminal Investigation Department and asked for three detectives.

The manager looked through the list of Poldringers, for there were many entries under the name, most of them being tradespeople. One, of whom no further information was given, was living in the Xenienstrasse, and another, without any professional status, in the Ludwigstrasse.

The girls were given in charge, and Wenk went to the Ludwigstrasse. He came to a lodging-house, looked at the surroundings and inspected the inside, and then went to the Xenienstrasse. Then suddenly his heart stood still, for in the Xenienstrasse, at the address given under the name of Poldringer in the telephone list, he saw on a professional plate the words

DR. MABUSE,
Neurologist.

He hastened away, merely noting the numbers of the houses standing near. The street consisted of detached villas. A mist swam before his eyes, and the blood pounded in his pulses; there was a sound as of pistols in his ears. He had his man. No, he had not got him, but at last he knew who he was!

Before doing anything else he drove to the prison, for the time Cara Carozza had demanded had now expired, and what she might tell him would probably set the seal upon the success of his enterprise.

Early that morning, when it was time for the warder of the women's prison to make his first round, the door of Cara's cell was opened. The dancer was still asleep. She was shaken by the shoulder and, awaking quickly, found the warder bending over her, yet it was not the warder, it was Spoerri. Surely she was dreaming? But no, she was still in prison. How came Spoerri to her bedside? She put her hand to her eyes to shut out the vision, and yet she knew in her heart it was reality. Spoerri was standing there. He said to her:

"Surely you know that I am in league with the warder?" She nodded. "Then you know, too, that he told me what happened yesterday when the State Attorney came to see you?"

"What did he tell you?" the girl asked breathlessly.

"That you are going to betray the master!"

The dancer sprang out of bed. "Who says so?" she shouted.

"Please don't talk so loudly. The warder says so."

"It is a lie."

"The warder would have no interest in lying."

"Did he tell the doctor so?" she asked anxiously, and Spoerri lied in answer:

"Yes, of course he did, and the doctor sent me to you."

"It is a lie," cried Cara again, on the verge of tears; "I was going to save him!"

"How can you prove that?"

"I was going to save him, I tell you. Spoerri, danger is threatening him."

"Danger is always threatening him. That's mere nonsense. Can you prove what you say?"

Cara hastily related what had passed between her and Wenk. Spoerri answered indifferently:

"I mean, can you prove it beyond all shadow of doubt? But be quick, please, for I must get away from here in five minutes."

"What can I do to make the doctor believe me?" asked the girl in despair.

"I must tell you that the doctor is very disturbed, for he could not have believed it of you."

"No, no, I could never have done it," she stammered, thoroughly downcast; "but how am I to prove that I didn't . . . how can I prove it? Surely *you* know, Spoerri, that . . ."

Then Spoerri with a smile drew out of his pocket a small flask. "The proof lies there," he said.

"Where?" asked the distracted girl.

"In here, my pretty one; don't you see?"

"I don't understand you," said the dancer.

"Oh, you don't need to understand, my child, only to drink. Just one little mouthful to swallow and then the doctor will know your word was to be relied on."

Cara looked horrorstruck at the little flask. "What is it?" she asked.

"A heavenly drink, my pretty one, nothing that hurts one in the least. The doctor himself made it up. But mind you throw the bottle out of the window quickly! See, I am opening it for you. Be sure you don't forget that! And be quick about it, do you hear? Throw it away *at once*, for if there's no bottle to be seen, nobody will know what has happened. That's what the doctor expects of you; that is a proof that no one can doubt. Besides, you know us. Even your husband . . ."

With that he drew a knife out of his pocket, playing with it lightly. He threw it at the door, and it stuck there with the point transfixed. He pulled it out and put it away again.

"Do you see that?" he said. "Now I must be going. Well, au revoir!"

He was about to leave, but Cara sprang towards him and clung to his knees, sobbing.

"But I am still so young, and I love life. I have been very useful to him. I was hoping to be set free . . . by him. Set free at any rate, even if he can never love me again."

"Well, I can only tell you," answered Spoerri, "that he is very much disturbed about all this. You can take it or leave it."

Then the girl said, "Then I will free myself of this existence. I will show him, a thousand times over, that he can trust me. I will give my life for him. . . ."

"Oh, spare me your heroics!" said Spoerri roughly.

But the girl went on unheeding, "What am I after all?—a mere shadow following him about and hiding out of his sight, but yet unable to part from him. Yes, I will prove it, a thousand times over. . . . I will free myself. . . ."

"Well, if we are taken by surprise now, it will be a hanging matter for us both; he told me so. And who knows whether they won't even get *him*?"

Then Cara became suddenly calm, and said quietly, "It is all right; you can go. And tell him. . . . No, you needn't say anything. I don't want anything more from him. . . ."

Spoerri left hastily, leaving the little flask in Cara's hand. It was now warm from her fevered touch.

"He does not believe me," she said to herself tremblingly. "The Doctor will never believe me again. Strange—and yet, can there be any greater proof to offer that I was always faithful to him? Oh life! base, incomprehensible, disturbing life! This terrible life of mine! Come!" she said, apostrophizing the flask; "we will show him there is nothing to fear from me. We will prove it to you, you . . . king of men . . . you enchanting murderer! you sublime destroyer! my horror and my bliss! . . ."

She shouted aloud, then she grew fearful lest her cries might endanger the beloved life, and she snatched the stopper out of the bottle. Standing upright in the middle of the cell, she drank, a moment later throwing the bottle out of the window, where the sun streaming in proclaimed the morning of a new day.

Wenk faced the curator of the women's prison.

"Yes, sir, we were sorry to be unable to inform you, but it was not possible to communicate with you. The doctor says it must have been a heart-stroke, for she was found lying dead in her cell this morning."

Amazed and horrified, Wenk entered the cell. It was empty, the straw pallet bare. Cara's clothing lay on a stool. Wenk looked round, and was about to leave when he saw something shining on the window-ledge. He went back and examined it, and found it was a small piece of glass, rounded in shape, with a very strong odour clinging to it. Wenk jumped on a chair and found another piece of glass outside. Then he went down into the courtyard, and very soon had collected all the other pieces of the bottle. It had broken against one of the window-bars. He had the glass tested, and there were evidences of poison upon it.

He walked back to his chambers—pondering over this new occurrence. "Another victim!" he said to himself repeatedly. One more sacrifice, a real sacrifice, for this one had sacrificed herself. This light-of-love had offered her life as a sacrifice to her love. She had not meant to tell him anything—he realized that now. She merely wanted to put him on the wrong track that she might have a chance to warn the criminal. "I have no success with my women helpers," he thought sadly, asking how it was that these steadfast souls should be found on the side of evil rather than good—always on the side of evil, it seemed to him. When the dancer was buried next day, he was the only outsider present, and he returned to his chambers slowly and sadly.

There, however, plenty of work was awaiting him. His idea was to seize Dr. Mabuse in his

own home, and first of all he must ascertain when he was sure to be found at home, and the two confederates must be secured at the same time, the one at the Xenienstrasse and the other in the Schachen villa; there must be no time for one of them to inform the other.

His preparations must be complete, down to the very last detail, and then a surprise attack, which must not last more than three minutes, could be made. It was clear that a man who could boldly carry through such crimes as these, in the very heart of the city and in the teeth of the highest civil powers, would have secured himself against all possible emergencies in his own quarters. That was undoubtedly the case, and all these careful preparations of Wenk's required time.

First of all, he must be able to secure one of the neighbouring villas as his post of observation. It was here that he laid claim to Herr von Hull's help. He drove straight to him, asking, "Can you do me a very great service? Will you employ a confidential agent to lease a floor of one of the houses No. 26 or 28 in the Xenienstrasse, or, better still, the whole villa? I want it just as it is, and to be able to go in the day after to-morrow. The question of expense need not be considered. I shall want the house for two or three weeks. Spring is approaching, and there may be someone who wants money for a little trip out of town." The old gentleman promised to do what he could in the matter. Then Wenk asked the police inspector who had engaged him for the road-engine, to come to town. He arrived by the 11 a.m. express.

"Matters are approaching a climax, inspector," said Wenk. "You must be ready to take action at any moment. I will leave the plan of it to you. You have had plenty of time to get to know the geography of the place and the opportunities it affords, but the very moment you receive my order to surround Villa Elise, you must go at it, hell for leather. You must get your man, alive or dead. We shall put another motor-boat on the lake, and you can double your force on shore. The road-engine can be moved away now. The spring season is just beginning in Schachen, so you and six or eight of your men can be visitors to the lake-side!"

At seven o'clock next morning the inspector returned to his post, and at eleven o'clock old Hull came with the lease of villa 26 in the Xenienstrasse.

"There is a young couple living there," he said, "whom my suggestion exactly suited. They wanted to go to Switzerland to visit their parents, but were frightened at the cost of the railway fare. I offered them five thousand marks for a month's rent of the villa, and they will change them in France. I am afraid I am causing a loss to our exchange. . . ."

"But you are benefiting your country in another way, Herr Hull, and that you will very soon find out!" said Wenk.

"You can take possession of the villa at six o'clock to-night!"

At six o'clock, Wenk, disguised as a cyclist messenger, went into the empty villa, leaving his bicycle outside. He was quite alone in the house, and at once sought for a window which would

afford him vantage ground. He concealed himself behind a lace curtain and began to watch the street. The first thing he noticed was that after he had been there about a quarter of an hour someone stole his bicycle and made off with it. He had never seen a thief actually at work before; this side of his calling was presented to him for the first time to-day. He regarded it as a favourable omen, being much amused by the comic haste with which the thief had looked round him on all sides, although he was even then straddling the machine.

For two hours he kept watch on the front door, side door, window and roof of Mabuse's villa. No one went out or in, and though Wenk remained on the watch till midnight, nothing was to be seen. He fell asleep at the window, woke and watched again, and then slept once more, finally awaking in broad daylight. His servant brought him a meal prepared in a restaurant near. It was a long vigil, and Wenk, bringing the telephone to the window, held conversations with acquaintances and with some members of the police force.

At last, towards six o'clock in the evening, a car drew up and immediately drove away again. A gentleman went up to the front door. Was it Mabuse? No, this was an old gentleman, with the feeble and uncertain step of a paralytic. Possibly he was a patient.

Soon after that Wenk saw a chimney-sweep leave the house. He went along quickly and cheerfully, puffing away at a cigarette. Wenk had not seen the sweep go in; that must have been mere chance, though. The old invalid seemed to be there a long time; could he be waiting for the Doctor? Perhaps, though, he was one of his assistants. It seemed hardly likely. However, he must do nothing rash.

Twilight was already advanced when a man with a parcel rang at the front door, which was opened with surprising promptness. Half an hour later this man came out again, and so it went on. Even through the night people kept coming and going, and next day it was the same story.

On the third day Wenk was called up early by his man. The Criminal Investigation Department had some important information for him. Something had happened during the night at a gaming-den. Would he like an official to bring him a report? Yes, he replied, but the detective should come in some sort of uniform.

Half an hour later the detective, got up as a telephone repairer, appeared and told his story. Last night a young man had come to the guard-room and said that he and others had been playing baccarat in a secret gaming-house. An old gentleman, who seemed to be partially paralysed, was playing too, and he always lost his money. When it was just upon three o'clock in the morning, the old gentleman had a sudden fit of rage, shouted out something, and immediately three men, who had also been playing, leaped on the table. They drew out revolvers, shouting "Hands up!" Then a fourth man went from one visitor to another, searching their pockets and taking all their money away, as well as that lying on the table. They had taken twelve thousand marks from the man who was telling the story. When they came to the old gentleman they left him alone, and he suddenly stood up and walked out as if there was nothing the matter with him. Two of the thieves accompanied him, and the others protected him from behind, and outside there were two cars waiting.

This story excited Wenk greatly. It did not interfere with his scheme, but, on the contrary, it showed that Mabuse felt himself secure. Yet while Wenk was here in a strange house behind a curtain like a sleepy bat, the criminal was going his accustomed way, calmly, boldly, as if he had nothing and nobody to fear. After all, it was quite natural. Why should he not go free when the man who had sworn to bring him to justice was in hiding here behind a window curtain!

Taking a sudden resolve, Wenk left his post, and did not return till evening. He had given an order to extinguish the street-lamp in front of Mabuse's house by breaking the glass and damaging the electric-light bulb. It was a dark night, and as soon as Mabuse's windows showed no light Wenk entered the garden. He was carrying a canister filled with fine meal, and he clambered over the fence into Mabuse's grounds and went cautiously along the garden path, scattering the meal in a thin layer over part of the short walk between the garden gate and the house. Then he hurried back over the fence to his own garden and into No. 26 again.

Half an hour later someone left Mabuse's house, but Wenk could not see who. After an hour and a half, he heard steps in the street passing beneath his window. He saw a man wearing military dress, who went quickly to Mabuse's door and disappeared within the house.

Wenk went downstairs again and hid behind a shrub in the garden. After a long time he heard Mabuse's front door open, and in the starlight he could see that a stout, elderly lady was leaving the house. She went into the street, where a car seemed to spring up from nowhere. She got into it and drove rapidly away.

Wenk clambered over the hedge between his and Mabuse's garden, crept on all fours over the grass to the garden path, and examined the ground by the help of his electric torch. Then he saw that the footsteps of all three persons were exactly the same. Therefore, whoever it was who came out first, and the soldier, and the elderly lady, were one and the same person. And then it occurred to him that yesterday and the day before yesterday the chimney-sweep, the paralytic, the messenger with his parcel, were the same person, and this person was—Mabuse. Wenk carefully removed the traces of the meal.

To-night must lead to some conclusion or other. In both the nearest guardrooms special police were ready, fully armed, prepared to break in at any moment. When Wenk knew Mabuse to be safe at home, he would hasten to No. 26, send a telephone call, and three minutes later Mabuse's house would be surrounded by police. To burst the door would be the work of thirty seconds. Six men would remain outside and surround the house. The other six would join him in a rush on the place. When Mabuse was secured, the order to Schachen would go through.

Wenk stole rapidly back to his own garden, stretched himself flat on the ground and waited. The earth radiated the warmth of this day of late spring, and he felt the power that lay in the soil. And in an attitude of tense expectancy, two hours, one hour, perhaps even minutes only before his work would be crowned with success, it seemed to Wenk as if music, a music betraying the secrets of all hearts, stole over his senses. Tears filled his eyes, and his bare fingers caressed the fragrant ground. He felt as if it were the very essence of manhood laid bare, the manhood for which he was risking his life.

He had decided to lie here waiting until Mabuse, in some disguise or other, should return to the house. Nothing could go wrong now. When the other was once more inside, like a mouse caught in a trap, Wenk would hasten back and breathe his order into the telephone.

But before this could happen he was to undergo a strange experience, something which made his heart stand still and a cry by which he had almost betrayed himself pass his lips. A car came up the street, and stopped with a noisy shriek in front of the house. But no one got out. No, it was Mabuse's door which opened, and in the person descending the steps, and pausing in the glow of the headlights, Wenk recognized the Countess.

If he had not pressed his lips to the ground that very instant, his cry must have betrayed him. The car hastened back whence it had come. "Wife-robber! Husband-murderer!" raged Wenk.

So this was the secret of Count Told's death. "The man is a devil and a werwolf!" he cried.

Suddenly he felt the cold night penetrating his clothing, and he found himself trembling. Was he going to have an attack of ague now, at the very last minute? He struggled to subdue the feelings that threatened to overcome him. In the still night he heard the hammering of the pulses in his brain, and he bent all his energies to the task of listening for what was to happen.

Twelve o'clock struck, and it seemed as if the town were shaken by the powerful strokes, as if these beats must penetrate into the very heart of this house which sheltered the monster, and every vibration become a dagger hacking him to pieces.

The clock had ceased striking, and a footstep sounded, but whether near or far off Wenk could not at first determine, for the throbbing in his ears. Suddenly the garden gate creaked, and in the starlight he saw a broad expanse of white shirt-front. A man advanced rapidly to Mabuse's door, and in the instant that he stood on the doorstep, waiting for it to open, the starlight revealed to Wenk that the figure was that of the man he was seeking. And now the net was closing around the victim.

Wenk waited three minutes, four minutes. Would not the world come to an end during these moments? Might not the skies fall, and the last judgment begin?

Then he pulled himself together and climbed stiffly over the fence to return to No. 26. He rushed upstairs in the darkness, seized the telephone, called for the number and gave the guardroom the orders he had arranged. He had but to name the street and give the number of the house, which till now he had kept a secret.

A motor-cyclist was to go to the second guardroom directly the telephone message was received. The car containing the first relay of police was to follow him immediately, and at the second guardroom those aroused by the cyclist's warning were to be ready to get in the car and proceed with the others at full speed to the villa. Thus it had been arranged.

After Wenk had telephoned he hastened downstairs again. He stood in the dark entrance, waiting for the first sound of the approaching car. Was he not consumed with fever? No, he bit his lips firmly, made his muscles taut and commanded himself to keep cool. He must be cold and hard as steel. Steel it should be!

He had not long to wait.

XVII

The house was surrounded by the police who had been detailed for that duty, while Wenk with the others hastened to the front door and rang the bell loudly, but the explosive was already prepared. Mabuse had not yet gone to bed. The unusual noise in the street had sent him to the spy-hole in the shutters, whence he could see what was happening, and the first glance revealed the police. While he was still looking through his peep-hole, and letting nothing of the happenings outside escape his eye, since the searchlights illuminated everything in the street, he was taking down from the cupboard close by, where it hung in readiness, a police uniform.

He heard the ringing at the door. He had a telephone concealed in the wall, and this George had connected with a villa at the back of his garden. He pressed the connection and called, " Spoerri ! "

" Yes, Doctor."

" The police are about to break in. Make your escape as arranged. Fetch the Countess. Get the new car ready for me. Burn all papers. Send pigeon-post to Schachen. That's all." While still speaking, he began hastily to put on the police uniform over his own clothes.

Then there was the sound of explosion, and

the door was broken open, a chair flying into the air. With one bound Mabuse was in the corridor. When the explosion occurred he was on the first floor, which was shut off from the stairway.

Close behind the first of the police who entered through the shattered door came Wenk, a heavy revolver in his hand. He was at once struck by the style of the interior, its beautiful carvings and its costly Persian carpets. He took this in at the very first glance as he hurried by. He pointed in silence to the stairs, and while those behind went up them, he and some others inspected the three doors leading to the basement. All were locked, and in a few minutes they had been burst open. The police rushed through all the rooms ; one, trying to turn on the electric light, found that it was cut off.

Six policemen had stormed the stairs. The door in the panelled wall of the first floor leading from the stairs was open. The men advanced beyond it into a dark corridor, holding their revolvers cocked, and touching all the objects they encountered in the darkness. Nowhere was there any electric light to be had, and it was some time before they had enough electric torches to suffice them. Then in a moment they had taken possession of all the rooms, and the doors leading to the corridor were shut behind them by the detectives, who removed the keys. Wherever they found the rooms empty, they hacked upon the chests and cupboards. Mabuse heard the sounds, which made his usually silent house as noisy as a factory.

When furnishing the house he had had a little secret chamber made near the doorway leading to the first floor. A carpenter belonging to his band of accomplices had done the work. This chamber was so cunningly concealed in the cleverly contrived decoration of the walls as to be invisible from the corridor outside, and on the inner side the existence of a door would never have been suspected. It was here that Mabuse had concealed himself when he heard the explosion that wrecked his front door. In this hiding-place he had a second telephone connecting him with the other villa. While the noise of the men storming the stairs covered his movements, he tried to make use of this connection, but there was no answer from the other end ; therefore Spoerri must already have got away.

Now came the moment when everything must be risked, and the chances of escape or of death were equal. The little chamber had a second door, and this, concealed like the other by the decoration of the panelling, opened directly on to the stairs. It was here that Mabuse stood to listen.

He subdued all his senses with the supernatural powers at his command, subordinating them to his hearing ; rustlings, voices, hackings, cries, abuse, orders, the clicking of electric torches, even the spitting sound of the acetylene searchlights, were inscribed on his ear-drum as on a microphone. His powers of hearing must be concentrated on one single moment, and that was the first second, or fraction of a second, in which there should be neither step, nor sound, nor even breathing upon the stairs. If this instant occurred before the systematic search of the house, room by room, had begun, it would give him a favourable opportunity, his only opportunity, for flight. It seemed as if the very blood in his veins stood still, the better to help him discover the fateful moment. All the other senses were in abeyance, and his will concentrated on his hearing alone. He felt as if his ear were as large as the Lake of Constance and his hearing as fine as the vibration of a filament in an electric light. Everything else within him was cold as ice, and anæsthetized, but his ear bore a volcanic life within it, and at last he reached that single heart-beat of time which should prove his salvation.

He pushed open the narrow door on to the stairs. Until he had reconnoitred he ran a risk that his ear might have deceived him, but he saw at once that all was well.

In the corridor below a constable was standing. As he passed him, Mabuse cried, " He has shut himself into the bathroom. . . ."

Then he saw them all running from the rooms downstairs and pressing to the staircase. Two men stood at the entrance, in the midst of the fragments of the shattered door. " I am going for reinforcements," said Mabuse as he approached them ; " he has entrenched himself in the bathroom. . . ."

They let him pass, and he ran, using one hand to brush others aside, the other grasping his Browning pistol. Yes, he was getting away now. . . .

The night was bright with the searchlights, and their rays spoke to him of freedom and good luck. Dazzling, enchanting visions floated before his spirit. He drank in deep draughts of the light outside.

"What's up?" asked one of the men outside as he rushed out.

"His honour's orders . . . reinforcements wanted; he's entrenched himself in the bathroom," called Mabuse in reply.

"Take the motor-cycle," shouted the other.

What luck! Mabuse already had it between his legs. He fell upon it, mounted, feeling as if he had fallen from a tower on to a bed of down, and the night, like a friendly monster, swallowed him up, protecting him alike from the searchlights and from the violence with which the search-party would have seized him.

A quarter of an hour later he threw the motor-cycle into the canal and rode away on his little racing car as if sailing upon a cloud. The car stretched its nozzle towards the south-west and away it bounded in delight along the boulevard. It was an armoured car. . . .

"What is the matter?" Wenk asked the police as they rushed past him.

"He is in the bathroom, and has entrenched himself," one of them called back.

Wenk ran up the stairs. "Where is he?" he cried.

"In the bathroom," they shouted on all sides.

"All hands to the bathroom," ordered Wenk.

They ran hither and thither, and their pocket-torches could be seen gleaming on the walls in all directions. Where are they all going? To the bathroom. Fifteen men are hastening to the bathroom. "But where *is* the bathroom?" Wenk inquired. Nobody knew where the bathroom was. And now everyone was shouting out, "Halloa, what's up?"

The electric switches were overhead, and a turn of the loosely fastened screws now gave dazzling light to the whole place. The rooms were brilliant in their wealth and luxuriance—pictures, hangings, carpets, bronzes, furniture. The bathroom was found at last, and the bath in it was of Carrara marble, but the whole house was empty and deserted.

Wenk was almost beside himself. He felt like an empty shaft, down which everything good and beautiful and all that was lofty and successful had fallen into a bottomless abyss. They tapped the walls with their hatchets, suspecting some hidden space, and soon the secret nook was discovered and the riddle solved.

Wenk pulled himself together. There was yet another mouse-hole, and it was in Schachen, at the Villa Elise!

The State Attorney made rapid arrangements at the telephone headquarters. All the lines were connected up with him, and everything had been prepared beforehand. The highroads from Munich in all directions were guarded by police. The stretch of country between Munich and Lindau had eight posting-stations, and at every one there was a telephone ready at any moment throughout the night to inform Munich of anything that had happened there.

Wenk raised the alarm in all directions. Mabuse's stratagem had given him a half-hour's start. If things had happened as he imagined, and the car of the fugitive were now eighty or ninety kilometres away, there was yet ten minutes before Buchloe could announce its passing through. He had hardly reckoned up the distance, however, when he heard "Buchloe speaking!" and his heart sang for joy.

"A car has just gone through at terrific speed in the direction of Kempten. It is a large covered car."

It was 2.10 a.m., and a quarter of an hour later came the Kaufbeuren report.

"A large covered car, travelling about eighty kilometres an hour, has just passed, and taken the Kempten road."

It was now 2.25 a.m. Wenk began rapidly to make calculations as to the speed of the car, but just then Buchloe rang up again: "A second car has just come through, a small, open car with one person in it!" Ten minutes later Kaufbeuren gave the same report.

"They are escaping in sections. The second car is going faster. Mabuse must be in that one, and his accomplices in the first," thought Wenk.

From Ober-günzburg he had the announcement of both cars in the one communication, for the second went through just as the official had informed him about the first. Buchenberg told him the same.

Then Wenk thought it time to call up Schachen. He gave directions to await the arrival of the two cars and then take action according to the plan

arranged. The man whom it was above all important to secure would probably be in the uniform of a Munich constable, and they were not to be misled by this, for it would be Mabuse.

"Now we have him at last," said Wenk jubilantly, as he received one communication after another, all of them proving that Schachen was the destination aimed at.

Place after place stood out on the map to Wenk, and through the night the villages and tiny towns called to him and ranged themselves on his side. He bound them together with phantom threads, reaching to the very limits of the Empire. He wrung the secret of the broad highroad out of it in the darkness, and the highroad knew nothing of its revelation. With one small lever he held the long, unending avenue, shrouded in darkness, in the hollow of his hand. The forces he had disposed were obedient to him, their general.

"Hergatz" rang on the telephone, and the sound of its bell seemed to his ears as intimate as if it were his own name being called.

"Yes," he said, "it is the State Attorney, Wenk, speaking from Munich.

"A little open car has just gone by very rapidly in the Lindau direction. Two persons were in it, but not clearly recognized."

"Thank you. Hold on a minute. There will be a second car through."

Wenk waited, hearing in the suspended lines all the sounds occurring through the night between Munich and a little place like Hergatz, which he had never yet visited.

"Are you still connected?" he asked after a while.

"Yes, sir."

"Hasn't the second car come through?"

"Not yet, sir."

After a time he inquired again, and once more he was told No.

A quarter of an hour later he rang up Hergatz again, and the official said that no second car had been seen.

Wenk opened out the map again and made a feverish search. Yes: Buchenburg—Isny—Gestratz—Opfenbach . . . there was Hergatz! And behind Isny there was a highroad leading to Wangen and the Würtemburg district, or on the left another leading to Austria.

He rang up Wangen, but there was no answer. He repeated the call, and after storming for ten minutes he tried again, but still in vain. He had left Wangen out of his reckoning and made no plans concerning it, and in the direction of Austria he could give no orders, for the power of his lever did not extend so far. A car had disappeared from his ken; a car had been stolen from him in the night, snatched away in the darkness from the strange, unfriendly, gloom-surrounded streets.

And then he thought again that the large car might have had a breakdown. Yes, it must have been so, and that was why the smaller car had two people in it, when there was only one at the previous stage. This new circumstance need not worry him. His luck was not going to desert him: he trusted to it, and it would not fail.

He rang up Schachen. "There will probably be only one car. Let it arrive, and then wait twenty minutes to see whether the other one comes, and surround the villa on all sides. Then deliver your blow, as hard as you can!"

Scarcely had he finished speaking when the telephone rang once more, and the last stage—the Enisweiler railway-station—was heard speaking. A small, open car had turned off the Lindau-Friedrichshafen road, and was rapidly approaching Schachen. Two people were in it.

It was all complete! Wenk himself could do nothing more now. He would have to wait. Perhaps in a few moments now the fight on the lake-side which his tactics had prepared might be going on. He ordered them not to wait for the second car, but to enter the villa immediately after the arrival of the occupants of the first one, to seize and handcuff them, extinguish the lights, and wait a full hour for the second one. He looked at his watch, and laid it on the table before him. It was now 3.18 a.m.

He felt a twitching in the muscles of hands and feet and a throbbing in his brain. It seemed as if a whirlwind of pain were rising from his hips to his head, remaining there a while, and then taking the same direction again and again, times without number.

XVIII

SPOERRI had fetched the Countess from the villa in the western suburbs, which she had occupied but half an hour, and hurried off with her in the car. Mabuse, in his light little two-seater, had caught up the heavier car between Kaufbeuren and Günzburg, and both drove on without stopping. This had all been arranged between them long before. Where the road to Wangen diverged from the Lindau road, the large car ahead came to a standstill, and the little car drove close up. The Countess was transferred ; Mabuse drove on, and Spoerri took the road leading to Austria.

Mabuse had arranged that at this point their roads should separate. Spoerri should reach Switzerland by way of the Rhine. Each of them must leave an address in Zürich with Dr. Ebenhügel, who could then exchange them. Mabuse, with the Countess, would drive to the Villa Elise, where George, who had been instructed by pigeon-post, would be waiting with the chest containing the securities and the jewels Mabuse would take with him on his flight. Then the three of them would immediately cross the lake to Luxburg, where a motor would be in waiting, and proceed along the Romanshorn main road to Zürich. There would be a brief stop at Zürich for the transaction of business.

It was likely that the authorities in Bavaria would ask the Swiss ones to search for the fugitives, and therefore Mabuse wanted to make his stay in Switzerland as brief as possible, and to push on to the Italian frontier. He had had passes for himself and the Countess prepared in a Portuguese surname. An Italian official had been bribed, and by his help all difficulties disappeared as chaff before the wind.

The Countess sat at the back of the car, behind its high body. In front of her Mabuse, sitting at the wheel, seemed like some monumental image. In the uncertain light the outlines of his powerful figure stood out with ghostly effect. There was not the slightest movement to be seen, and from her seat behind he looked like a block of granite, seen standing alone in a meadow.

They sped by highways, villages, hamlets, and then the waters of the lake gleamed in the night. A few lights at intervals on its shores, shapes appearing and disappearing in the darkness, dimly suggesting human beings, a change in the air one breathed . . . two villages appearing to float like illuminated ships upon the water . . . there was Switzerland already.

Lindau lay to the side, and their car was now racing along roads bordered by country villas. And then came the last minute. The car bounded across the track to the Enisweiler station, and rushed forward to the Villa Elise. At the first glance Mabuse's sharp eyes saw that the gates opening on to the drive stood wide open.

The pigeon-post had arrived safely and in good time then. He felt as if the impetuous haste with which he had driven hither in the darkness had yielded him a fresh sensation. It was now just before 3.30 a.m., and he kept his senses constantly on the alert without slackening his speed. When he was about to turn into the drive, he pressed the brakes hard for a moment before allowing the car to run its course ; it held up for an instant, then, veering round, went straight through the gates and turned towards the garden.

Just then he felt something spring on to the car. On the clutch side, springing over the door, a form squeezed down on the outer side of Mabuse. Two hands covered his own, snatched the steering-gear from him, and a wild, hoarse, impressive voice whispered, "Doctor, I'm here : it's George. Give me the wheel. We are surrounded. Straight forward into the lake. . . ."

Mabuse yielded the wheel and let go the brakes. Under its new guide the car dashed ahead, thundered round the grey walls of the villa, abruptly turned a corner, got on to a grass-plot, and raced frantically across it, along the sloping gravel patch to the wall which divided the lake from the garden above. Through the gate in the wall it leaped like a wild horse and then clattered down the inclined wooden footway, the boards thundering beneath it. A moment later its nose was in the water and the lake hissing around it.

George leant forward as quick as lightning and gripped levers, Mabuse helping him. The night re-echoed the Countess's cry, and then the vehicle, tottering slightly at first, but slowly righting itself, went onward over the surface of the water.

"Splendid ! " cried George. "It is working like magic ! "

This car was an invention of his own. It could be driven straight from the highroad into the water without stopping, and a couple of levers turned it at once into a motor-boat.

"It is the pigeons that have done the mischief," said George, when he had gained thorough control of his vessel. "After they arrived in the dark, about an hour ago, I seemed to hear whispering voices behind a shrubbery. I looked very carefully round, and thought I noticed a movement going all round the park. In one place, and then twenty paces further on, and then twenty paces beyond that again, in a circle, the whole way round, so then I knew we were surrounded. However, I managed to get to the gate leading to the garden without being seen. It took me fifty minutes to do the hundred yards. If we had not had this car, we should now be sitting handcuffed inside the Villa Elise."

The constables, who had distributed themselves with all possible precautions about the villa, and had taken four hours to complete the ring around it, one after another taking up his position, had heard the car thundering along through the silent night. They lay in tense expectation at their posts, awaiting the whistle which should summon them to the house to fall upon the criminals.

Just an hour before there had been a slight interruption. A bird had suddenly flown through a tree and disappeared beneath the eaves. One of the constables close to the house had noticed it. He had seen the bird fluttering about the roof and then suddenly disappearing without having flown away elsewhere. His conjecture that it was a carrier-pigeon was soon confirmed by the appearance of a second bird, which also disappeared in the eaves. The constable stole softly to the inspector and announced what he had seen and suspected. The latter saw at once what this might indicate. Poldringer had received warning from Munich, from the fugitives. He therefore ordered a constable to proceed with the utmost caution from one outpost to another and relate the fact, saying that those in the house had probably been warned, and that they must redouble their precautions and at the same time be prepared for stronger resistance.

The movements of the constable as he went from post to post had put George on his guard. . . . Mabuse's car reached the grounds, and the inspector's quivering fingers were already raising the whistle to his mouth. At the moment when the occupants of the car should have left it and be about to close the door of the house behind them, he meant to give the signal. Two detectives were lying concealed in the shrubs to the left of the front door, and could reach it before the key was even turned in the lock, but the inspector gave no sign.

The car rushed round the corner, not stopping at the door. It tore frantically round the house as if about to rush pell-mell into the Lake. The inspector, forgetting all caution in the excitement and disappointment of the moment, sprang forward after it, and saw that it actually did disappear in the water. Like a sinister amphibian it leaped

over the low wall, thundered down the wooden footway and sprang into the Lake.

Then at last he blew his whistle, and the posse of constables came running from all directions, knocking up against each other.

"To the shore!" shouted the sergeant.

There was no car to be seen anywhere. About two hundred yards from the shore the engines of a motor-boat could be heard in the darkness. They searched beneath the roadway, up and down the lake-side, dazed and disappointed, but in vain.

Then at last the inspector realized what must have happened. The unceasing efforts, strain and hopes of an entire month had come to nought. His prize capture had escaped him. He was so absolutely disheartened by this maddening thought that he unconsciously pressed to his temples the revolver that he held ready-cocked in his hand, as if his very life must be forfeit through the failure of his enterprise. A moment later he lowered the revolver, and the ball, singeing his hair, fell harmless into the night. Upon the Lake a light shone out. Further on, another. The shot had aroused the attention of the spy-boats.

Not till then did the inspector remember these allies, whom in his first access of despair he had completely forgotten. "Bring Morse lamps!" he cried. How *could* he have overlooked the motor-boats?

Immediately flashes were sent to the two boats: "The fugitives have escaped, and are on a motor-boat on the lake."

"All right," was flashed back, and a few minutes later powerful searchlights were directed towards the lake. It was not long before they had located the escaping boat. But they had also warned it, for at that very moment it was about to run into them.

Mabuse and George were at once aware of their danger. The two searchlights advancing on them seemed like the open jaws of a monster approaching to devour them. George steered to larboard, and the boat settled its course in a new direction. The water streamed over the rudder and gleamed about them, frothing in the darkness. "There is only one way," said Mabuse in a low voice, "the Rhine estuary."

He considered the matter coolly and boldly. He was once more in a situation quite familiar to him, because he had lived through and overcome it countless times in imagination. On the German shore, whither they could easily return, everyone would be on the lookout for them. On the Austrian shore there was only Bregenz, shown up clearly by the searchlights. Between these two regions there was a large and very sparsely inhabited territory around the Rhine estuary. In twenty minutes they could reach land and then make their choice between Switzerland and Austria. If they were lucky enough to run their vehicle on to land again as easily as they had run it into the water, they would have sufficient start to make their escape certain.

One of the pursuing boats, however, lay right out in the lake. It seemed to guess at the fugitives' intentions, for it did not follow them in a direct line, but remained to starboard, keeping

abreast of them near the Swiss shore, as if awaiting a favourable opportunity to intercept them.

Perhaps it only wanted to keep between them and Switzerland. The searchlights from both boats met above Mabuse's. The first faint traces of daylight were already appearing. Firing was heard behind them. One of the boats now followed in their wake, but at a little distance to the rear. The two pursuing boats exchanged Morse signals with each other.

For a time George steered a zigzag course, the vehicle swaying hither and thither with the constantly changing displacement of the rudder. George wanted to make it appear that he was trying to break through to the Swiss shore, but he, too, was excited by the searchlights. He did not succeed in getting out of their glare for more than a few moments at a time. The boat which was astern only went so slowly now because it was solely concerned with keeping them under view and cutting off their retreat to the German shore. The Morse signals used were secret ones, and neither Mabuse nor George could make them out although, through their frequent trips by water, they were fairly well acquainted with such things.

Suddenly the boat to the starboard side of them extinguished its searchlight. Above the infernal noise made by their own motor they could hear the engine of this boat ahead, its sound growing shriller and nearer. Their own motor was exerting its utmost pressure. The shooting had now ceased, and above the sounds made by their boat another noise could be heard. Mabuse bent forward towards it, listening with all his ears, the searchlight falling full upon him. He still wore the police uniform which had made his escape possible.

At first the Countess had lain in the boat half-conscious. The shots, the droning of the engines, the haste and excitement of the men beside her, had gradually awakened her, and she began to grasp what was happening. She, too, heard, above the throbbing of the engines, a second sound. She sat up, holding her head over the side whence it came, and listened intently.

" What is that? " she asked Mabuse, who was standing near, planted firmly on the deck with his back to the engine and appearing entirely at ease. He could be clearly seen in the searchlight with his hand on the gunwale, listening intently.

" Nothing ! " he hissed ; " be quiet ! "

" What is it? " she asked again in a sharper tone, and there was something in the sound of her voice that had not been heard for a long time. It seemed as if a stone that had long lain at her heart were now being dissolved into a mass of pulp. To this feeling, still but half-conscious, she yielded herself more and more. By degrees she appeared to realize what was happening within her. Then, rising and standing in front of Mabuse, she suddenly cried out, " Now, at last. . . ."

The sounds of the water and the night stole over her like a joy beyond bound or measure. Eagerly she absorbed with heart and mind the light, sweet rustle they made, and she perceived that every moment they became more pronounced. At last she understood. The pursuer

was advancing rapidly upon them, and came ever nearer. . . .

" What do you mean by that ' at last '? " asked Mabuse roughly. " Sit down and keep quiet ! "

" What is that sound we hear? " she said in a ringing voice.

" Death—perhaps ! " answered Mabuse calmly.

" For *you* ! " cried the woman facing him, above the swirling of the waters. " I shall be able to shake you off at last. I shall be saved from you. The werwolf will be caught, and your power over me and over others be at an end ! "

" I will soon show you that," said Mabuse, advancing and bending over her ; and then what happened came so quickly that she could scarcely distinguish the movements.

" George ! " called Mabuse, the one word only, and then he unfastened the police uniform which concealed his clothing and threw it towards George, who at once donned it and stood near the Countess, exposing himself to the searchlight, while Mabuse took his place at the wheel.

They heard a shout close to them. " Halt ! " cried a voice from out the sounds her eager ears had been absorbing. " Halt ! " A shot whizzed in the air, and an echo resounded.

George fired in return. The boat gave an upward lurch and then suddenly two high dams enclosed it. Where was the lake? Where was the wide expanse of night? There was a rustling sound, and a beating against the spring tides of the Rhine. The searchlight had disappeared, and a soft, warm mist covered the stream and the dams. They were smooth as railway lines, and a bridge lay diagonally above them. The throbbing of the engine resounded from its arched vault.

Then a sudden movement flung the Countess to the ground. The boat sprang up into the air with a loud report, but the woman was caught as she fell; she could feel herself lifted; someone held her, and ran swiftly with her; her cries were stifled, and a red mist swam before her eyes.

George lay on the shore, one arm broken. With the sound one he felt for the police helmet and crammed it down on his head. The fall had stunned him slightly, but he could have escaped; nevertheless, he lay still.

It was not long before he saw two revolvers levelled at him. Two electric torches glared before his eyes. "We've got the one in uniform!" said a voice. George kept quite quiet. He was carried from the land into a boat and fettered to a thwart. The engine started, and the boat drove across the lake back to Schachen.

The day was dawning when George reached the wooden landing-stage once more. They took him into the villa and locked him into a room with barred windows, out of which he could not escape, even had two men not been in charge of him.

The inspector said to himself, "Thank God, we have caught him at last, and in his police uniform too! thank God!"

At five o'clock that morning Wenk left Munich in a hydroplane, landing two hours later at

Schachen. He flew up the stairs of the Villa Elise to reach the room where the imprisoned robber-king was waiting . . . waiting for *him*, the conqueror!

"Here is Dr. Mabuse," called out the inspector, advancing towards him. "We have him safe at last, thank God!"

Wenk, jubilant, victorious, and intoxicated with success, entered the room and saw the man in police uniform fast bound to his chair.

"Where is he?" he asked.

"There . . . on that chair!"

Wenk looked at the man more closely. He knew it already: his quarry had escaped! Back into the endless, the dark and empty night, everything fell once more, and at first he could neither hear nor speak a word.

Suddenly the inspector said, "But that is Poldringer, the man we've been watching all these weeks!"

"Yes, that is Poldringer," answered Wenk heavily. Mabuse had escaped.

XIX

MABUSE hastily carried the insensible woman from the bank of the Rhine channel to the nearest house. It was that of an osier-binder.

"We have had an accident," said Mabuse, and then seated himself at the window to watch the approach.

When an hour had gone by thus, and the Countess opened her eyes again, Mabuse noticed that she started on recognizing him and turned away, overcome with dread. He went hastily towards her and, stooping down, he whispered, "We are saved! We are irrevocably bound together!"

The whispered words impressed her with a certain sense of comfort and security. She no longer withstood him, and soon sat up, the peasant's wife promising to look after her.

Mabuse sought for the nearest village on the map. Then he went thither, in security, knowing that he was not being followed. George had remained as the victim of the pursuer's vengeance, and he was saved. The other's fate was due to the little trick of the police uniform.

The village was not more than twenty minutes' distance, and in an inn he found a telephone. He ordered coffee, and then rang up Zürich. In

half an hour's time the call came through, and asking who was there, he was answered, "Dr. Ebenhügel, Zürich."

"Has Spoerri arrived?" he inquired.

"Spoerri has just come: he is still here;" and Spoerri rushed to the telephone.

"Spoerri, I've had a misfortune. George is taken, but we have escaped. Bring the car here at once, and put in a travelling dress and coat for my wife. I shall expect you at 2 p.m. at the Au railway-station in the Rhine Valley."

"Very good, sir," replied Spoerri.

"I called her my wife, and said it quite coolly and intentionally," mused Mabuse, dallying with the thought, which yet seemed to imply something like a fetter; but he dismissed the idea, saying, "She *is* my wife, my own property! . . . It is true, she *is* mine."

Spoerri arrived punctually. "I shall drive you through the Engadine direct to the Italian frontier," he said, when Mabuse had told him all that had occurred. But to that proposal Mabuse merely uttered one word: "No!"

"But, Doctor," Spoerri pleaded, "you can't remain in Switzerland. The Munich police have informed the authorities here of your movements. We shouldn't get even as far as Toggeburg. It would be almost better to return to Germany."

"And that's exactly what I mean to do! Spoerri, from this day forward the State Attorney's life stands under my protection. You are to revoke my earlier orders to the Removal Committee at once."

"You are going in for a remarkable friendship, Doctor," tittered Spoerri.

"He is to remain absolutely under my protection!" repeated Mabuse, and they drove through the flat marsh-land back to the peasant's hut.

The Countess got into the car, and they were soon hastening to the Austrian frontier. "What sort of passports have you for us?" asked Mabuse.

"Swiss ones: please take them," answered Spoerri, handing over documents with many visas, calculated to arouse a confidence which was constantly abused yet remained unconscious of the fact.

Three hours later the car was driving along the highroad leading from Bregenz to Kempten. It drove past a house from which, the night before, a message had been flashed through to Munich telling of its passing, and went towards Würtemberg. The travellers spent the night in a village south of Stuttgart.

In the evening Mabuse went to Spoerri's room, and said to him: "There is just one thing left for me to do in Germany, in Europe . . . and that is to get hold of that lawyer, the State Attorney, Wenk, alive. I want him *alive*, mark you! as much alive as a fly under a glass. The Countess and I are staying here to-morrow. You will go to Stuttgart and buy, whatever the price may be, a two-seater aeroplane. We are quite safe here. The landlord did not even register us, so if the police appear he is bound to hold his tongue, or else he will be fined. Have you any brandy?"

Spoerri shrank back in dismay; his martyrdom was about to begin again. Nevertheless, he had smuggled three bottles out of Switzerland.

"Of course you have some brandy!" said Mabuse, before he could even answer.

Mabuse drank from the travelling cup which he always carried in his pocket, and Spoerri had to fill the toothglass on the washhandstand.

Mabuse was longing for a carouse, a really heavy carouse which should seize him by the throat and press him under the water, as if he were being given a millstone for a swimming belt. When he had emptied the second bottle, he saw that he was not likely to get his wish.

"Haven't you any more?" he asked.

"That's all there is. I couldn't venture to bring any more across the frontier."

Mabuse laughed satirically. "That's fine. Here is Spoerri, who has brought three railway vans full of salvarsan, two of cocaine, enough prostitutes to fill three brothels across the frontier, yet he hasn't enough courage to bring more than three bottles of brandy! Empty your glass into mine. Don't your wages include the getting of brandy?"

When the third bottle had been emptied Mabuse, clear-headed as ever, but more hot-blooded, went back to the room next his own, occupied by the Countess. He was out of sorts, and resembled an engine that had been run too fast, so that the heat had covered the glowing cylinders with vapour, and they could not be set in motion.

He approached the Countess's bed. "You and I had come to an understanding together. You have broken through it : you were ready to betray me ! "

"I was ! " said the Countess in a low voice.

Then ungovernable fury seemed to possess the man. He snatched her from the bed, and as he seized her, lifted her high in the air as if he were going to dash her in pieces against the wall like rotting timber. At that moment he hated her ; she was the embodiment of all his weaknesses. For ten long minutes, when the patrol-boat was on their track, the power of his will over her had ceased, and now, when he wanted to destroy her and would have dashed against the wall the head that defied him, he could not do it.

With a low cry the woman found herself held on high, and realized the strength of arm and indomitable will-power of the being to whom she was secretly—and yet irrevocably—bound. She longed for death. Softly she repeated a fragment or two of a prayer learnt in her childhood's days, and she knew that if she were to die now she would draw this man also to his death.

But Mabuse, conscious of his power over the woman he held aloft in his grasp, suddenly came to himself again. Once more he realized that he was alive, was safe, and felt a fierce joy in the knowledge and in his possession of her. Almost gently he laid her down, and the poor woman, condemned afresh to a life of humiliation and degradation, was at the mercy of the tyrant who dominated her, and from whose power there was now no escape. She lay wide-eyed and tearless till the dawn, her only desire for floods and

floods of tears wherein to drown for ever the misery of her existence.

On the morning of the following day Mabuse flew with her from Stuttgart to Berlin.

There, caught in the toils of the mighty city, among those whose instincts he developed and used to his own ends, he lived, bent on one aim alone. One idea presented itself with ever-increasing intensity, one vision swam ever before his eyes, intoxicating him with a fury of desire. His phantasies, his strivings, and the goal before him gained their force because born of the strongest impulse within him, his lust for power !

There was one man in the world who had set himself to follow his path, had discovered him in his own territory, and dislodged him from his fortress. There was one alone who had dared to disturb his plans, to oblige him to undertake a flight in which his life had been in danger. It was due to this man's efforts that the State had interfered with his schemes for getting rid of those whom his imperious will desired to remove from his path.

From the woman who had first moved him to the very depths of his being he had wrested all the power of will with which her personality resisted him. It was his pride to know that. He had taken her being, her beauty, her independence, her exclusiveness, and grappled them to himself, and this work of his was the very highest spiritual expression of his powers and capabilities. But between him and her there was a period of ten minutes in which she had escaped his domination, in which he had to renounce his claim to this symbol of his superhuman force. And that period of time, that barren, useless part of his life, he owed to the power of this one man.

His flight from Germany with this woman and his journey across the Atlantic had been so minutely prepared in all its details that only death could intervene. His empire of Citopomar, with its virgin forests, tigers, rattlesnakes, where death lay in wait at every moment, its mountains and its waterfalls and its rare exotic growths, was waiting for him, waiting to set him free from Europe, to offer him a new life. Any day might see him crowned as emperor.

But he would eat of Dead Sea fruit for the rest of his life, did he take possession of his realm before he had seized upon this man with all the full force of his lust for power and his deadly hatred, had held him within his grasp and annihilated him. Between him and Wenk it was a struggle for existence, and he could know no peace while the other lived.

Once, when the thoughts surging within him would no longer be controlled, he replied to the Countess's inquiry as to when they would leave Germany, "I shall catch him alive. I shall catch him like a bird in the snare. He will flutter helpless into my hands. Not till then do I go."

She turned away afraid, guessing the man he meant. Since that moment of her resistance and hope of escape she seemed to have become more subdued than ever, falling deeper under his

demon spell. She did not venture to oppose or question more.

Mabuse's enterprise with regard to Wenk developed slowly. But steadily and surely the net around him was tightening. . . .

Wenk was in Munich again. George had been imprisoned there, and he played the rôle of a deaf mute. No one had heard a word from him since his arrest. He was confronted with the constables and tradespeople from Schachen who had seen him for many weeks, with the young fellows whom he had tried to hand over to the Foreign Legion, all of whom instantly recognized him, but he did not utter a word.

One morning they found he had hanged himself with his braces. He had written one word on the wall of his cell, the word that one of Napoleon's generals had made renowned after he had lost the battle of Waterloo.

An exhaustive search in the Villa Elise brought little to light. It merely revealed proofs that Mabuse employed the money obtained by gambling or theft to carry on smuggling and profiteering on a gigantic scale. The police worked side by side with the Swiss authorities, for it was believed that Mabuse must be in Switzerland, or at any rate that he had passed through. Wenk went once a fortnight to Zürich. Now and then one of Mabuse's gang was caught, but all were so thoroughly schooled that no word of betrayal escaped them.

News reached Wenk from Frankfurt that a gambler was at work there, whose description so closely resembled Mabuse that Wenk travelled thither at once, but when he arrived there was no trace of the man to be found. Three days later there was a report of a similar kind from Cologne, then from Düsseldorf, and later both from Essen and Hanover.

Wenk went hither and thither, not doubting in his own mind that he was indeed on the track of Mabuse. The latter must have spies in Munich who watched and reported Wenk's movements. Knowing that he was followed, he took every possible precaution, and employed all the cunning at his command. On his journeys he made use of trains, cars, aeroplanes indiscriminately. Since he could not help suspecting that Mabuse had accomplices among his own subordinates, Wenk watched these very closely. He changed his chauffeur and his housekeeper, altered his address and his telephone number, took rooms in a hotel, or lodged with friends in the suburbs. But as soon as he arrived at the town where the gambler had been seen, he found he had vanished without trace of any kind, only to reappear a few days later in some other part. The whole country already rang with reports of the existence and operations of the robber-king. Dr. Mabuse, the gambler! It was like a ballad, expressing the devilry and defiance of all who offered resistance to existing law and order, and it spread from place to place.

In all the towns the police arrested men in gangs, but when the criminals were sorted out, this man, whose capture was worth more to them than all the rest, was never to be found. Suddenly

it struck Wenk that Mabuse must be making his way by a circuitous route to Berlin. From his superior officers Wenk obtained permission to leave Bavaria, and got in touch with the Prussian courts of justice, and these appointed him to Berlin on special duty.

He at once travelled thither and took lodgings in the Central district. Mabuse saw him arrive at the railway-station, and an hour later he knew where he was staying. At last he had him within reach, in the place where he desired to accomplish his scheme of revenge and towards which he had been working, for Mabuse in reality had never left Berlin. In all the towns to which Wenk had travelled in search of the gambler, Mabuse had doubles, persons of his own gang, instructed by him. Munich was too small for the scheme Mabuse had in hand. The abysses of Berlin would be a safer hunting-ground, and the hunt began on the very next day.

That day Wenk had been describing to a junior colleague in the Berlin police his course of action in "the Mabuse case." They had talked about it together, discussing a plan of operation, but the only conclusion they had come to was that the gambler should be allowed to show his own hand first. To aim at him in the dark would be likely to reveal to him prematurely the whereabouts of his pursuers.

In the evening, when Wenk had taken a meal in the "Traube" restaurant, he visited a café, and then, tired out by his long discussion, he sought his lodgings. There a man accosted him, standing in a doorway removed from the light.

"If you please, sir . . ." said he.

"What do you want?" asked Wenk reluctantly.

"Would some cocaine be useful to you, sir?"

Wenk went on without vouchsafing a reply, and he noticed that the man followed him, but when he came to the busy Friedrichstrasse he lost sight of him.

Wenk soon took himself to task for having let the man escape him thus. He ought to have got into touch with this pedlar of illicit wares, for he belonged to the same stock as Mabuse. He was half inclined to go back, but the feeling of weariness was too strong for him and he went home.

The next night he took the same way home from the restaurant, but the man was not there. Wenk lingered here and there, and then, as he approached his lodgings near the Police Market, a man came out of an entry towards him, saying in a whisper, "Do you want to see some nude dances?"

Wenk stopped still, saying, "You have come just at the right time. I don't belong to Berlin, and I should like to see the real night-life of this city just for once. Where are your dancers? Go ahead!"

"Follow me, then. I'll go in front, and when you see me go in somewhere, you come quick, guv'nor, 'cos of the peelers!"

Wenk promised to follow his lead. The man went round the corner, listened to see if he were following, and then went on again. Suddenly he disappeared. Wenk went a few steps straight on. The man must have gone into one of the entries near, and he walked slowly, expecting to find him, and looking round about. Suddenly he heard the man's voice behind him, speaking low and reproachfully: "I don't call that quick, guv'nor. You'll have the bobbies after you if you can't be more spry. Come on here, then!" and the man pulled him into a house standing far back. The door opened on to a dark corridor, and silently and unawares it closed behind him, while the corridor was lighted up in the same instant. This corridor led into a little living-room, and that again into a hall crowded with people. Two gentlemen sitting near the door made room for Wenk beside them. His guide had disappeared.

What Wenk saw was a simple performance, deriving its interest only from the secrecy with which it was performed.

He heard the conversation of the two men at his table. One of them said, "The only thing that interests me is how this entertainer manages to get a hundred or more persons here, year in and year out, without the police finding it out. Now, as an expert, you just tell me that!"

The other answered in German that sounded unfamiliar, "Well, you can't really tell whether it is known to the police or not. There are such places winked at by the police because they are traps for criminals—yes, really traps set for them. Now in Budapest . . ."

Wenk listened eagerly. The gentlemen went on talking, drawing him naturally into their conversation. They disclosed their calling, and then gave their names. One of the gentlemen was, as Wenk had conjectured, a highly placed police official. They frequently met each other. The Hungarian told of various interesting and complicated cases occurring during the practice of his profession. He described the Budapest haunts of crime, touched on the many secret gaming-houses which had sprung up so quickly everywhere since the war, and waxed eloquent against the ever increasing boldness displayed by criminals and the mob generally.

Wenk, with a certain unconfessed distrust, talked very warily, saying that he was only on leave in Berlin, for the scene of his activities lay in Munich. But Berlin, as the hotbed of crime, afforded a good field of study for a Munich criminal prosecutor. He touched lightly on the existence of Mabuse, though without naming him, and related some of his bold and shameless crimes.

"Just lately," said the man from Budapest, interrupting him, "we took into custody a similar adventurer, and we did it by curious and not exactly legal methods, but we got no further in any other way. With us in Hungary, as it is with you here, the assistance of hypnotism in the detection of crime is forbidden. We had the man of whom we were almost certain—but, my dear sir, you won't betray me, I am sure, for the professional interest you feel in putting an end to such aberrations is just as strong in me—well, we were practically certain that he was the leader of a gang which had several murders to their account. He was in prison, as I have told you. He made himself out a deaf mute, and we could glean nothing from his papers. No one knew him, yet we felt almost sure of our man, and that kind of thing is almost unbearable to an expert, isn't it?—for when he appeared before their worships, there was the risk of his being acquitted for lack of sufficient evidence. That was a most disagreeable idea to me, for I had spent about six months in tracking him down, and if he were discharged the mistake would be due to me. I therefore took a very bold step. A friend of mine had hypnotic powers. He was a barrister, and had often displayed these gifts of his in private. I wanted him to go to the jail with me, but he said, 'I can operate on him from outside,' and, indeed, a quarter of an hour later I knew that we had the leader of the gang at last, and various disclosures were made which shortly after sent him to the gallows."

While the Hungarian was telling this story Wenk experienced an aversion to him. He had a sensation of profound mental resistance to the man, although he could not explain what had caused such a reversal of feeling.

"Are you also interested in persons who possess this gift of suggestion?" asked the police superintendent.

"Uncommonly so!" answered Wenk.

"Perhaps you would like to meet my friend, and see something of his gifts?"

"Is he in Berlin, then? Yes, that I certainly should!"

"Yes, he's here now. He has given up practising law, and now exercises his gifts openly. He has very quickly become celebrated. You must have heard the name of Weltmann?"

Wenk did not like to say No, so he answered with a subdued "Certainly!"

"Well, he is the celebrated Weltmann. You know he is noticeable on account of his having only one hand. He lost the other in the Carpathians in 1915. Well, we'll arrange a meeting, then. I will see him in the morning. Are you on the telephone by any chance?"

Wenk mentioned his telephone number. Both the gentlemen then left, to go to a house where ether, cocaine and opium were procurable, and other more obvious vices were pandered to.

On the very next day Wenk was summoned to the telephone. "Police Superintendent Vörös speaking! Things have fallen out most favourably for you, my dear sir! In the home of one of our countrymen, about whom I will tell you a few things in confidence, Weltmann is giving an entertainment this very evening. It is quite enough for you to have expressed the wish; you may consider yourself invited, without any further formality. It is a most hospitable house, and you won't feel yourself in any way a stranger. There are between sixty and seventy people invited. I'll undertake all the arrangements, and if it suits you I'll come in a car for you at nine o'clock. The villa is some distance out behind Nicholas Lake."

"Thank you very much. Your kindness overwhelms me," answered Wenk, "and I do not know how to requite it."

"Oh, *that's* all right," answered the other heartily. "We Hungarians are only too pleased to have such a chance. Then we can regard that as settled?"

"Quite, thank you!"

"How very amiable the Hungarians are," thought Wenk, as he hung up the receiver. He felt quite ashamed of himself for having had a doubt of the police superintendent's good faith.

He spent the afternoon among the archives of the Criminal Investigation Department, where he and the colleague with whom he had talked concerning the Mabuse crimes looked through the collection of photographs of criminals. Face after face drew his attention. He would not give up until he had seen them all, and when he came back to his lodgings, tired out with his protracted labours, he had only just time to don his evening clothes in readiness for the function he was to attend.

XX

POLICE SUPERINTENDENT VÖRÖS was punctual.

"Now I must tell you something about our host and my fellow-countrymen out there by the Lake," he said directly the car started. "He was formerly Prince of Komor and Komorek, and he married a Viennese dancer. Of course, his people were furious! They made things so disagreeable for him that one day he said, 'All right: you've gone too far. You've done with your Prince. From to-day I am plain Komorek,' and then he wandered off. He was very rich, anyhow, and not in any way dependent on his people. The only thing that is still 'princely' about him is his mansion out yonder. You will see it for yourself. He's been living there for ten years now. His wife is very smart and exclusive—more exclusive than a princess. Of course, she is no longer young. Have you had your evening meal?"

"No, I had no time."

"Well, that does not matter. At Komorek's house they are always ready for guests. You'll get something good to eat there."

Wenk asked himself, "Why is the man so talkative?" and once more his feeling of repulsion for the Hungarian regained its sway. He was inwardly both excited and uneasy, and in spite

of the darkness in the car his eyes smarted. There seemed to be a constant stabbing sensation in them, and the thousands of likenesses he had seen that day seemed to be chasing each other round and round in a never-ending stream. "How much I should like to be at home and in bed!" he thought to himself. The car drove through districts which were unknown to him, and this was peculiar, for he had made the trip to the Nicholas Lake several times already and thought he knew the district beyond Friedenau. To-day, however, everything seemed unfamiliar. Was it the thick darkness of the night and the very sparse illuminations allowed since the war, or was it his own mood, which was responsible?

"Surely we ought to be at Nicholas Lake by now!" said he.

"I am not familiar with this neighbourhood," said Vörös.

"I used to have friends out there, and I often drove there by motor-car, but of course that was before the war."

"Ah, yes, before the war. Everything was different then," and they both became silent.

Wenk looked at his watch, but it was too dark to read the dial, and for a long time now there had been scarcely any lights.

After a prolonged pause, Wenk said, "Surely the driver has not lost his way?"

"He is a Berlin taxi-driver. He told me he knew the way quite well."

Wenk took up the speaking-tube: "Chauffeur, you know where it is? Nicholas Lake, the Komorek Villa."

At this moment the car swung round, and lights appeared at the end of a long avenue.

"Here we are!" said the superintendent of police.

The motor soon drew up among other cars, all close together in front of the outside staircase leading to the house. It was not lighted, but the three French windows in the hall on to which it opened gave sufficient light. Wenk advanced rapidly to the light. Vörös conducted him to the cloakroom, which was filled with overcoats. A clock in the hall struck ten; its strokes were harsh and hasty, as if it would flog the hours away. Wenk, trying to count them, could not keep up with it.

"Ten o'clock," he said to himself. "We've been an hour coming, and yet the car seemed to be doing about forty-five kilometres an hour. Nicholas Lake is not so far away as all that!" and again a faint misgiving stole over him.

He looked towards the Hungarian, who was smiling pleasantly at him. Then they went towards the large folding doors.

"Allow me to precede you, so that I may introduce you to the Princess at once."

A man-servant threw open the door and Wenk followed the police superintendent into a fairly large hall. The first thing he noticed was that the light was very subdued; then he saw that in one corner there was a semicircular raised platform, draped with Persian hangings. Some chairs and a table, covered with a dark cloth, stood upon it. In the rows of chairs which filled the room, folks in evening dress were sitting. There were many fewer ladies than gentlemen, and those there were, were dressed in very fashionable and striking attire.

Then Vörös murmured, "The Princess!" and presented Wenk.

"Is this the friend you spoke of?" said the lady, with a winning smile. "You are very welcome, Herr von Wenk. We are pleased that you are able to give us your company this evening. May I pass you gentlemen on to my husband? A hostess's duties, you know, my dear sir! . . ."

The lady stepped a little nearer to one of the electric lights, which were all covered with silk shades of a strong deep colour. Then Wenk saw that his hostess, whom he had taken for quite young, was very much made up and thickly powdered. Her dress was extremely glaring, and Wenk was startled by her general appearance as, with an extremely friendly smile, she inclined her head towards the man advancing, saying, "My husband," and left them.

"Good evening, Prince," said the police superintendent to a man who bowed to Wenk in what the latter considered a slightly affected way; and as his host raised his head again, Wenk looked into a swarthy face with a black moustache, strongly resembling one of those seen in the collection of criminals' likenesses he had been studying earlier in the day. The lady of the house was not in sight.

The Prince, who in appearance was somewhat common, possessed the most finished manners. He had, moreover, the very rare gift of conversing without saying anything, for all the subjects of conversation seemed, as it were, extraneous to him. He accepted any subject offered him, apparently only to give form to the matter in hand, but made no contribution of his own.

"That manner of his shows breeding," thought Wenk. "He is only moderately gifted, but he has such a desire for form that even the most trivial matter must be expressed 'just so'! But what a curious appearance he has!"

The Prince led him to the first row of chairs, and the company were begged to take their seats. Wenk did not see Weltmann among them, for he would, of course, have been noticeable at once, through having lost his hand.

Wenk sat on his hostess's left, with the Hungarian police superintendent close at hand. The rich hangings on the little stage swayed lightly, and a tall, broad-shouldered man, with rather bowed shoulders, came forward. He was well and fashionably dressed, but in contrast to the other guests, who were all in evening clothes, he wore a dark grey woollen street-suit. It was at once evident that the hand covered with a dark grey glove was an artificial one. "He is a Hungarian, that's quite certain," thought Wenk, "in spite of his German name."

Weltmann had a thick black moustache with drooping ends. His eyebrows rose suddenly, making a high arch over his eyes. His black hair was combed right back and plastered smooth. The few words he spoke were simple and somewhat rough.

He said that the gifts he was about to display

before the Prince and Princess and their guests were matters of fact, and he thought that the guests would prefer facts rather than an attempt to explain in words what would probably never be explainable. He would first offer himself as subject, and ask someone to name a lady and a gentleman in the company. Perhaps the Princess would name one.

Then the Princess said, "As the gentleman you want, I should like to name my neighbour, Herr von Wenk!"

"And the lady? Perhaps the Prince would name the lady?"

The Prince answered at once, "Then I shall name my wife."

Weltmann seated himself, laying his artificial hand upon his knee in a way which everyone noticed. The other hand he kept in his coat-pocket. After a pause, in which he had collected his thoughts, he said, "Princess, have I ever had your watch in my hand—the little watch you carry in your hand-bag?"

"I don't believe you ever have!" answered the Princess.

"The number of that watch is 56403. It is an oval-shaped *dernier-cri* design!"

The Princess drew out her watch, opened it, read the number, and nodded. She showed it to both her neighbours, and said eagerly, "That's quite right!"

"Please to think of a colour and write it down upon a piece of paper, and show it to your neighbours."

The Princess considered a while. Then she wrote down, "The amethyst colour of Herr von Wenk's ring," and handed the piece of paper to Wenk.

Weltmann thought for some time, then he said hesitatingly: "It is a colour in your immediate neighbourhood, but it is rather indefinite. It is transparent, so it is probably that of a jewel. I cannot say exactly what two colours it is made up of, but there is violet in it."

"Lift your ring up to the light, Herr von Wenk," said the Princess, and all could see that a deep violet was mingled with a transparent bluish-white.

"Which gentleman did the Princess name?" asked Weltmann.

"My neighbour, Herr von Wenk," she replied.

"You, sir," went on Weltmann rapidly, as Wenk nodded slightly, "have your pocket-book in your right-hand breast-pocket. In it there are two notes for one thousand marks each; one is dated 1918, Series D, No. 65045, and the other Series E, No. 5567. Shall I go on, or will you see first whether this is correct?"

Wenk felt his pocket laughingly.

"No," said Weltmann, "I meant the right-hand pocket, not the left. In the left you have your Browning pistol, stamped with the Serraing trade-mark, No. 201564."

Wenk looked in amazement at Weltmann, for it was quite true. His Browning *was* in his left-hand pocket, and it was one of the Serraing make. From all sides folks gazed at him, and the Princess leant towards him, so that he could distinguish the scent of the powder she used.

"Well, what do you think of that, Herr von Wenk?"

The entertainer smiled down at him, saying, "You need not mind showing the revolver, for in another compartment of your pocket-book you have the permit which allows you to carry fire-arms. It was renewed in Munich on January 1, 1921, and its number is 5. You must have been in a hurry to get your weapon authorized."

"Was he dreaming, and was this singular man sneering at him?" thought Wenk. He brought it out, and everything was just as stated.

"Enough of that sort of thing," said Weltmann. "Now, if you will allow me, we will have some examples of transference of will. I should like one of the gentlemen to come up here."

Someone stepped on to the stage.

"Do you know this gentleman, Princess?"

"Yes, it is Baron Prewitz!"

"Is the Baron's being known to the Princess sufficient for the company to rule out the idea of any private understanding between him and myself?"

There were cries of "Certainly!"

Meanwhile Weltmann was writing on a table something which it was impossible for the Baron to read. Then he threw the small writing-block down to the company below. He looked at Prewitz, quite quietly, for a short time. Then Prewitz, with stealthy movements, left the platform and went slowly and cautiously from chair to chair, looking everyone in the face. Weltmann called out, "I should like four ladies or gentlemen to come up here quickly. Be quick, please!"

Several started up. Three gentlemen and one lady remained on the platform, the others returning to their seats. Weltmann placed them round the table, pointing at a pack of cards lying there.

"Are this lady and these gentlemen known to the company?"

The Princess nodded, and there was a chorus of "Yes!" Meanwhile Prewitz was advancing towards Wenk. Again Weltmann wrote for some time upon a memorandum, casting from time to time his glance upon the four sitting at the table. Suddenly one of them said, "Shall it be vingt-et-un or poker?" Weltmann went on writing.

They decided upon vingt-et-un, and at once began to play.

"We want one more," said the lady.

"I am just coming, dear lady," said Weltmann. "You take the bank!"

By this time Prewitz had come to Wenk. He looked at him steadfastly for a while, then suddenly seized his left breast-pocket and drew out the revolver, placing himself at Wenk's side, the weapon in his hand.

Weltmann said from the stage, "That is because you are so incautious as to carry a loaded revolver in your pocket! Please"—he turned to the audience—"be so good as to read what I have written there!"

Someone read out: "The Baron is to go along the first row, chair by chair, and where he finds someone with a loaded revolver in his pocket, he is to take it out and sit beside him with it."

They all clapped their hands, a proceeding which Weltmann, by a brief gesture, stopped. He left off writing, handed the block down to the Princess, and sat down with the card-players.

"Page one!" he said to his hostess. She read it to herself, then handed it to her right-hand neighbour and looked anxiously towards the stage, where the following incidents were taking place. Weltmann won game after game. Sometimes he looked away from the table, and then it seemed to Wenk as if he were beckoning him to come up. Wenk knew it must be a delusion, due to some effect of the light striking Weltmann's eye, but none the less he felt uneasy. The idea occurred to him to yield, and go up so that he might face this man at close quarters and make sure that those lightning glances had no reference to him. "Yet that would be very foolish!" he said to himself, striving to get rid of the impulse.

Suddenly, without a single word having been spoken, one of the players leaned back, saying in a clear ringing voice, as if speaking aloud in a dream, "What have I just done? I had twenty-one, and then someone spoke with my voice, and said, 'I have lost again.'"

He seized the cards he had thrown aside, and showed an ace, a knave and a ten.

"Too late!" said Weltmann, who was holding the bank. Wenk put his hands to his head. He had already lived through such a scene once before. When was it, where, and to whom did it occur? He cudgelled his brains to remember. The image of it stood out distinctly, but it stood apart from any suggestion of the time and place and person.

From the recesses of his mind a form seemed to emerge simultaneously with his groping efforts to recover the recollections he sought. A form—was it a human being, a lifeless column, a monster? He could not say which . . . but then the form was bleeding somewhere, and now Wenk saw, through the misty phantasies of these recent occurrences, that it had a mouth, and that this mouth suddenly uttered, in clear staccato tones, the name "Tsi—nan—fu!"

Wenk now distinctly recollected having heard this name from the lips of the old Professor who was none other than the Dr. Mabuse on whose account he had come to Berlin. "Dr. Mab . . ., Dr. Mab . . .," whispered the secret voices. Wenk tried to call to mind the features of the old Professor, but he could not recollect them clearly. Only the mouth which had uttered the name of the Chinese town with such strange impressiveness was distinct to his vision.

"Now why," said Wenk to himself in the midst of the images raised in him by these recollections, "why should I think at this moment of the pseudo-Professor? Why do I think of the Professor, and not of Mabuse under another form, his real form, such as I saw him that evening in reality in the Four Seasons Hall? Mabuse as a hypnotist? What audacity! As a hypnotist appearing in public? Had Mabuse the same disconcerting capability as Weltmann, and had Weltmann the same dark background of crime as Mabuse?" he asked himself. His thoughts grew ever more remote, more indistinct and unreal. They were no longer thoughts—they were misty images which had arisen in his phantasy under

the compelling power of those eyes yonder. He sought to fix his eyes on Weltmann, striving to picture him with a reddish beard, such as Mabuse had appeared possessed of when he first encountered him.

And then suddenly Wenk realized how it was he felt some unmistakable connection with the player there who threw away his cards although he held twenty-one and must undoubtedly have won the game. These words were familiar to him from the story told by the murdered Hull. They were written upon the first page of the notebook stolen from him by Mabuse's chauffeur when he left him that night in the Schleissheim Park, and he had copied them down word for word after his first talk with Hull. Yes, the bleeding form was that of Hull, and it drooped like a weeping-willow over Wenk's spirit. The blood-besprinkled leaves whispered ever "It is I, Hull! It is I, Hull!"

Then it seemed as if in the mists which continued to gather in ever-varying shapes in Wenk's brain there grew and stood out, as the bone stands out from its tissues in the Röntgen-ray photographs, a dark nucleus, a central, death-endowed essence, something stony . . . something black . . . a man.

The Princess handed him Weltmann's block, and he thrust these ideas away somewhat, though he had to struggle to see the words. Then he read: "The banker wins every game. If one of the players has a better card than he who holds the bank, he is incapable of holding them against him."

He had hardly read this when Weltmann, speaking from the midst of his game in a voice which seemed to strike Wenk to earth, said, "Read the second page!" Wenk turned the page in affright. He read, "Under the hypnotist's influence one of the players tries to cheat, by dealing himself an ace. He is caught in the act!"

Then the blood rushed to Wenk's heart, and like molten lava it coursed along his veins. His eyes were fixed and glassy, and his trembling fingers let fall the block. A horrible certainty burst upon him. That was the secret of Count Told's fall! Mabuse had subconsciously forced him to cheat, to ruin him in the eyes of the wife whom Mabuse desired to possess! That was why he had seen the Countess leaving Mabuse's house that night. Mabuse it was who had killed her husband.

What Mabuse had written down occurred on the stage. The lady, who had in the meantime taken over the bank, dealt the cards so as to cheat and was caught in the act. Thereupon Weltmann brought the experiment to an end. He released the four subjects from their hypnotic state, and, disturbed and still dreamy-eyed, they sought their seats once more.

Weltmann looked down at Wenk, and the latter knew without a doubt that he was Mabuse. The suddenness of the discovery paralysed him for the moment, and he struggled to regain calm and self-control. Had he been enticed into a snare? Was the Hungarian police superintendent appointed as a decoy? Was this whole place, so far removed from other dwellings, and this assembly merely an ambush arranged on *his* account?

Slowly he fought the matter out. He stood between two poles. Either all around were in league with Mabuse, and in that case there was no hope of escape, and what he was now going through was merely the preparation of a revenge which could only end with his death, or else it was merely by chance that he found himself in a company in which Mabuse also appeared accidentally. It might well be that Mabuse was a Hungarian. He might also have been a barrister in Budapest formerly, for his relations with the Privy Councillor Wendel proved that he had had a twofold career. It was not, therefore, to be assumed straight away that he and this criminal could not have met by accident. The next question Wenk asked himself was whether Mabuse recognized him, and he told himself that it must be so, for Mabuse had seen him both at Schramm's and at the Four Seasons Hall; that was certain. But could this man be so foolhardy and so certain of himself that in spite of that he could represent before Wenk's eyes, with a devilish mockery, what he had just seen occurring on the tiny stage? If so, it provided the solution to all the enigmatic acts with which he had concealed his crimes.

The help of the police was quite out of the question, for Wenk did not even know where he was. But how would it be to let the Prince into the secret, and get help in the company itself to secure the murderer? He could only do it if he were quite sure of the company, otherwise it was doomed to failure from the start. He knew from experience that this master criminal was always surrounded by a bodyguard of accomplices, and that they were people who shrank from no devilish deed. Around him there must be many of Mabuse's confederates. Should Wenk, as if accidentally, make his way to some door and escape under cover of the darkness, leaving Mabuse to be dealt with at a later time, when he was better prepared to accomplish his overthrow . . . or should he try unobserved to find a telephone in the house and summon the police? But then again, where were they to come to?

"Isn't it remarkable, Herr von Wenk? Have you ever seen anything like it before?" said Vörös.

Wenk had heard the question, but he was so preoccupied with his own train of thought as to forget to answer it enthusiastically, as he had intended to do. In the torrent of ideas and possibilities which rushed through his mind he forgot his resolution. Vörös gave him a hasty glance, and just at that moment Weltmann asked for fresh assistants.

Wenk, coming to a sudden resolve, pulled himself together and calmly and boldly ascended the stage, the very first to respond. Far better to look the wild beast in the face than be behind him! Then he noticed that Baron Prewitz, whom everybody had forgotten, followed him up. Stepping forward as before, automatically, he came after him, still holding the revolver.

"You don't venture into my domain without protection, I see, Herr von Wenk," smiled the hypnotist.

"That is just sarcasm," said Wenk to himself; "he knows who I am!"

Wenk merely bowed, as much as to say that in Rome he did as Rome does. He was now standing next the hypnotist, and each took the other's measure. Wenk had pursued this werwolf with vindictive fury because in him he saw the enemy of all that could heal and restore the nation. When he stood there on the platform with him, isolated for a moment from all the rest, he felt as if they were two great powers going in opposite directions. To his mind it was no longer the conflict of good and evil; it was the struggle of man to man; and, oppressed as he felt, he still had something almost like confidence in the chivalry of his opponent . . . a confidence that rested upon an impelling yet hardly perceptible instinct: both were staking their lives on the result of the struggle. Each was directing a fierce attack upon the other, yet both must make allowances in this last supreme moment.

"If only I could sleep!" thought Wenk with an inward yearning.

He looked closely into Weltmann's eyes, taking in all his features. His was a powerful, muscular figure, and in imagination Wenk divested the face of its false moustache, eyebrows and wig, seeing beneath it the smooth-shaven, well-formed cranium of Dr. Mabuse. Wenk would have recognized him now beneath all his disguises. He gazed at him calmly, and the other's glance flickered. The large grey eyes seemed to withdraw into their own fiery depths.

For a time the performer paid no attention to Wenk. He concentrated on those who were advancing. No sooner had one of them set foot upon the stage than he unexpectedly turned right round again and hurried back into the hall. One after another did this ; a dozen, and even more. Those below were laughing heartily, and the little hall re-echoed with their merriment. More and more pressed forward, but the effect was the same on all. With one hand Wenk grasped the wrist of the other, anxious to see whether he retained consciousness of nerves and muscles. He meant to resist. The welling-up of generous and magnanimous feelings had rapidly cooled. He hated, menaced and execrated his enemy now, and prepared himself for the final conflict. His eager blood was inflamed against his foe, and he watched him warily, while still upon his defence. Somewhere in his being a stringed instrument like a guitar seemed to be playing a melody, and he began to listen to this mysterious music. It was so tender and yet so distant, but then he fell back again upon his position of guard and defence. Suddenly a strange idea occurred to him. How would it be if he too did like the rest, and ran as if impelled down there along the gangway past the chairs—that gangway of safety and escape—to where the big door stood encouragingly open . . . to escape and at the same time to do his duty . . . to go to the nearest telephone and summon the police . . . to carry out a daring trick . . . and then do like the others, return, still in the same dreamlike state . . . return to the hall and wait—wait for the police, the rescuers? . . . It would be a daring trick !

Already some of the muscles in his legs were twitching. . . . Then Weltmann called out harshly to Prewitz, " Why don't you pay attention? Cock your revolver ! Don't you see that this criminal is trying to escape? " He pointed at Wenk, and Prewitz cocked the revolver with a dreamy nonchalance, an indifference that excited horror and dread. He raised the revolver to Wenk's face, and Wenk saw in its little orifice the dark hell of danger before him, for he knew that the weapon was loaded. " The first step that he takes, without my orders, you will shoot," said Weltmann with an ambiguous smile.

In this dread moment Wenk heard once again the clear sweet musical tones, now in another direction. They sounded soft, sad, and familiar, as if it might have been his father whistling a lullaby beside his cradle. He listened, and in the few heart-beats in which he was lapped in the sound of those wonderful tones, he lost the sense of reality he had had when he felt with one hand for the pulse of the other. The flute became the magic flute, and round this phantasy there rose up an enchanted garden. A high, thick hedge circumscribed the area of his uneasy wanderings, but there was a gap in the hedge, a wide, unguarded gap, and in it he perceived the free light of heaven beckoning and enticing him to tear away and escape.

And then he ran, defying the Baron's revolver. He sprang with leaps and bounds across the stage . . . the weapon dropping from the Baron's hands. . . . He sprang down its steps at one bound, rushed along the gangway, leaping like a young colt that feels the approach of summer. The entire hall was animated over this crowning stroke of the hypnotist, but Mabuse sent after him a ferocious laugh that resounded from the walls which had witnessed it.

XXI

WENK ran full tilt past the servants at the door, who stood with serious faces, laughing behind their hands. He ran through the hall and the open door on to the steps, clattered down them, and flung open the door of the waiting car. It sprang forward, and in a few moments had disappeared in the dark avenue. In the hall Mabuse stopped laughing to say, "He is going to the Hell Café to fetch you some of the devil's white bread!"

The jerk with which the car started threw Wenk back on to the seat, but scarcely had he touched it than the cushions seemed to open and he sank quickly into a hole in them. Something closed together over him, and it creaked like iron. Then he awoke from his hypnotic state. He lay there in misery, unconscious how he had got into that position, with his head hanging back, apparently in some gap in the back seat. He tried to rise, seeking painfully for ease and consciousness, but he could not raise himself from the depths. Something seemed to press him down again, and hard unyielding fetters were crossed over him many times. The motor went at furious speed, and shook him against an iron grating which he soon discovered to be the fetters that made an upright position impossible. They pressed closely down upon him. He made a furious effort to throw them off, but soon found it was quite impossible. He would only have his trouble for his pains. He was absolutely done for. He was himself the bird which had stepped on to the limed twig !

With angry defiance he turned upon himself saying, "That is as it should be ! The stronger one conquers, and you were the weaker ! " But why was he the weaker? Because he had undertaken a task that from the very first exceeded his powers. Each one knows his own capabilities. But what had tempted him to undertake something beyond him? Why, in the most forlorn and miserable situation of his whole life—a situation that seemed so incredible that he still had a faint hope it might prove only a dream—why was he able to guide and reason out his thoughts like the solution of an arithmetical problem? What was it that had enticed him? He knew the answer. It was the good in him, the outcome of his feeling of responsibility towards his fellow-countrymen. He wanted to help them, and because his conscience was stronger than his powers, he had come to grief. If this experience were to end in his death, at least he would die in a good cause, and the soul-sparks which at his death would flame up again in some other existence would form a beacon to light others upward. . . . He would live again in spirit among men. . . .

The sound of the motor echoed through the forest, and Wenk heard it. What was the enemy's plan regarding him? The car raced on through the night like a ship driven by the typhoon. Where was it going? Whither were they taking him? Was it to Munich? But, if so, why? If they wanted to put him to death for having disturbed the powers of evil and undermined their efforts, why did they not take their revenge at once, instead of delaying it for hours?

He noticed that the windows of the car had no blinds, and he saw stars gleaming fitfully through the panes. They would not arrive in Munich till the morning, and it would be impossible to drive a fettered man by daylight over half Germany in a car with the inside exposed. They were carrying him off somewhere or other, but where? Where could it be?

It must have been midnight when he left the villa, but even that he did not know for certain, for of all that had happened to him since the moment when he had tested his pulse, he had only a dim and hazy idea. They must certainly be taking him to the place of execution now.

He recalled, with an endless yearning which seemed to encompass him like the sea, his long-dead father, and with all his energy he clung to these recollections, melancholy as their associations were. The jolting hither and thither of his body in the car and the mental excitement under which he was labouring made him sick, and in his helpless state he could not even turn his head aside. His brain lost the power of thinking in clear outlines. Spectres arose around him and devils played ball with him. They tossed him backwards and forwards between the Carse of Gowrie and Aconcagua, let him fall, and snatched at him again, just as he was about to be dashed to pieces on the Cape of Good Hope.

Then it seemed as if a gigantic black band had stuffed him down in a cave as if he were a sack. The walls of this cave were so close that he could not lie down, but suddenly, slowly, and yet without ceasing, they began to grow. They did not grow apart, however, but proceeded, always at the same pace, towards him, and the moment was already close at hand when they would crush his bones together and burst his brains. Consciousness forsook him, and he fell into a dreamlike condition, dominated by a dull sense of impending death.

When he awoke he found himself stretched out on a leather seat, the iron fetters no longer binding him. But his arms were tied behind him, and his legs were crossed on each other and fastened together. A large handkerchief had been bound over his face, so tightly as to be painful. It covered his mouth altogether and made breathing difficult.

It was now day, and he heard a rushing sound that rose and fell at intervals. He soon recognized it—it was the sea! A man looked down upon him. The handkerchief covered one eye only, and with the other he saw, over the edge of the bandage, half the objects on his eye-level. He did not know the man, who just then called to another, " Come here! he is awake." Then the other came to look at him, and he too was a complete stranger to Wenk. He heard them

talking, and one said to the other, " It is nearly five o'clock. The Doctor must be here soon ! "

The other answered, " If he said soon after five, he will come then. We must be ready for him ! "

" Can't you see anything yet? "

The two men went off. Wenk tried to raise his head, but could not see beyond the frame of the window. The country must be flat—there was nothing but sky discernible.

" Give me the glass ! There he is ! " Wenk heard suddenly.

" Now comes the decisive moment," he thought, and summoned all his powers to help him dispel the dread ideas which crowded upon him.

The events that followed occurred in rapid succession. The door of the car was flung open, and hands gripped him by the shoulders, which lay nearest the door. They dragged him out, his feet striking painfully on the step and then on the ground. The second man took his legs, and they carried him a short distance. Then Wenk saw sand-dunes in front of him, and a few steps further the men had climbed with him to the top.

" Faster ! " cried the man behind, as he turned round and looked back over the landscape.

Wenk heard a motor-car, and said to himself, " That is Mabuse coming ! " Suddenly a light awning appeared above him, and after a time he recognized it for the wing of an aeroplane.

The two men arranged everything with hasty movements. Wenk was laid on the sand, and two cords tied together made a noose under his chest and arms. One man raised his legs and these were fastened by two cords which had been attached somewhere to a pole rather high up. A third leash was then slung round his hips. It was not long before Wenk realized that he was hanging bound to the outer wall of the car of a flying-machine. He lay closely fastened there like a package that was to be taken on a journey. With his uncovered right eye he saw beyond the edge of the bandage that the aeroplane stood on a prepared landing-stage over a course which sloped down to the sea. Beyond it stretched the shore. It was ebb-tide.

"I am going to have a sea voyage," cried a despairing voice within Wenk sadly. "How long it is since my last voyage. All the years of war lie between, and yet now, for me, comes the war—the bombshell is prepared."

From the depths of his muscular being there came an answer to this sad voice of despair. He exerted his muscles against his bonds. His body moved and wriggled in the nooses, and the wing of the machine quivered beneath the shock, and swayed above him.

Then a broad face and a high, well-formed head bent over him, and two fiery eyes seemed to pierce him through and through.

"Aha!" said the voice of the man who stood above him.

"Yes, there is the foe, there is Mabuse," thought Wenk.

"Get in!" he heard him say, and there was the rustling of a woman's dress, and out of the rustling a voice . . . a voice that made his knees tremble in their bonds. He knew that voice! The rustling was louder and closer, and the woman's voice cried, "What is that?" Wenk heard the horror, trouble and anxiety that spoke in the voice as she put the question.

"Get in!" said Mabuse again. Then the voice, the well-known, low, sweet voice of the Countess Told, said in a tone of anxious entreaty, "What are you doing with this man?"

Wenk said to himself, "She does not know who I am."

"Get in! He's going to make the trip with us, and we haven't a third seat. Come along quickly, now!" cried Mabuse.

Wenk saw Mabuse's arm seize the woman and lift her into the gondola, then he himself got in, making use of Wenk's body as a step, and when he was settled in the pilot's seat, not two fingers' breadth above Wenk, he bent down to him and said in a harsh tone, "The gentleman is going to accompany us on our journey—but whither? Good luck!—All ready?" he called out to the men.

"All quite ready, sir!"

The propeller hummed and the aeroplane glided along the course so swiftly that the very moment Wenk felt the throbbing of the engine its wheels were already clear of the ground and the earth vanished from his sight. The machine soared upwards steeply, and it seemed to Wenk as if his body were standing upright. No word was spoken in the car. The air beat so heavily upon him that it seemed like flying wood, and he soon began to feel bitterly cold. The cold seemed to cut through the wide opening of his evening suit and strike at his very heart. He felt that it pressed ever deeper and deeper within him, like revolving knives. His hair was stiff and stood on end, and it seemed as if needles were pricking him all over. He had lost all capability of thought, save for one idea. It dimly occurred to him that he was enduring martyrdom, and that this martyrdom was on account of the Countess Told, whom he had once loved, at a time when such love was not lawful.

Then he felt the blow of a fist on his head, and a harsh voice asked, " Is twelve thousand feet high enough for you? " A few moments later he heard, " Or are you already dead—of fright? "

The voice died away and Wenk felt that the aeroplane was being righted. When it was flying level, a hand touched his head, hastily tearing away his bonds. Then Wenk saw the face of Mabuse bending over him. He was silent, but his features were distorted with a malicious joy which aroused horror. His grey eyes had neither shape nor pupils ; they were like old weather-beaten stones, and, as Wenk recognized with a shudder, they were glowering death at him. Then the capacious mouth opened like the yawning chasm in a rocky gorge, and the harsh voice said, " You have dared to oppose your will against mine. You are now facing your last moment, and I have taken the gag from your mouth so that my ears may enjoy the shriek with which you fall twelve thousand feet down to your own world ! "

Wenk heard his voice, and it sounded like thunder rolling along after the lightning flash. He saw that Mabuse was loosening the bonds

that held his legs. He tugged and tore at them. Suddenly his legs were free. For a moment they fell, then the leash that was bound round his hips held them again, and the hands were now busy with this. In a few seconds it was untied.

In his further fall Wenk's body regained an upright position, held only by the noose which bound his chest to the wall of the car. He suddenly felt that his hands were free, and at this feeling he was fired with a sudden hope. In the midst of his phantasies there surged upwards like a fairy story the recollection of the Countess's beauty and sympathy. He had never forgotten her, and now in the last moment of his life, when she herself was so close to him, his feeling for her, exalted to an undying and compassionate brotherhood, was wafted as a cloud beyond the savage and brutal murderer, to envelop the frail human being beside him with indomitable pride and courage.

Wenk saw her eyes, fluttering like birds shot down in the clear blue ether, glance for a moment beyond and above Mabuse's eager bent head. . . . He saw her hands, tearing off their fur gloves, cling white and trembling to Mabuse's shoulder as she strove to drag him back from his deadly intent.

But Mabuse shook the woman off, and raised his hands with mad rage to untie the last noose. He tore undone the first of its fastenings, making Wenk's body sink deeper, and beat away Wenk's hands, which were seeking to maintain a grip on the edge of the car, with his closed fists.

Then one last defiance of fate, arising from the will to live, lent strength to Wenk's voice as he shouted in the air, "He is the murderer of Count Told. He made him cheat at cards! He put the razor into his hands that he might cut his throat!"

A fist struck at his mouth, and blood spurted from it, yet at this last moment of his life it seemed as if his very blood were tasting the sweetness of a noble spirit. Then a final effort was made to release him from the bond that held him. A fearful weight pressed on his head, rolled over his body to press him downward. The weight of it was immeasurable, black, imbued with the swiftness of a raging storm. But all at once the iron weight was removed. A part of it became detached from the aeroplane, unrecognizable, and sank. Wenk's hands held the edge of the car as in a vice. The aeroplane hovered and swayed as if drunken with the high clear air.

This is what had happened:

When Count Told's name rang through the air, as if thrown from measureless space, it seemed to the Countess as if she were awaking from a dream at the bottom of a swamp. Since the night when she had been torn from her husband and chained to Mabuse's wicked will, she had never spoken his name, nor even thought of it. The memory had crept into her inmost being and hidden itself away, deep in the welter in which her life was inextricably bound. It had been forced there by the diabolic power of Mabuse's lust for domination, and the wife had suffered it in a kind of subconscious self-defence. Were it not so, she

would have been absolutely and entirely without escape from the werwolf.

There within her the name had lain and waited and watched until now it arose again to provide her with a way of escape.

Wenk's last words had brought it forth from the subconscious recesses once more. The Countess had received it as a direct weapon against the secret power of this man who had so long taken forcible possession of her will and her entire person. She suddenly came to herself, and all that was frozen within her melted. The gloom and darkness in which she lay bound grew lighter, and it was day within.

Then, too, she regained all the proud youthful force of her disposition. She fell into a God-given fury, and her muscles were endowed with unconquerable strength and vigour. Her hands and her heart were like iron, and she seized the first weapon to hand, the heavy screw-wrench, striking the murderer from behind, and dealing a terrific blow upon his skull.

Mabuse, judged and condemned, lost his balance, and fell over Wenk into the depths below, which instantly swallowed him up.

Wenk reached a thwart with his legs, raised himself up at lightning speed, the knots at his breast breaking of themselves. He fell into the car. The aeroplane was already swaying in space, but Wenk seized the throttle and righted it. It flew on, and after he had found his whereabouts he shut off the engines and allowed it to descend to earth and glide along the shore.

He landed on the sand-dunes of the East Frisian coast. He helped the Countess out of the machine. She was pale, but fully conscious. She fell down before him, pressing her hands to her face.

He raised her, saying, "We have saved each other's lives. Let us keep silent, and strive to forget. We part here!"

But the Countess answered, "No. I have nothing to conceal and nothing to forget. The blood that I have shed was entirely evil. I have saved him from himself and mankind from him. Who can bear witness against me?"

Wenk looked at her, dumb with astonishment, but slowly he understood. Then he was seized with awe. He wanted to say, "How proud, how courageous she is!" but his heart glowed within him. He spread out his arms in a gesture of self-abandonment and appeal. Life, his regained youth and vigour, came over him like a flood, and at the same moment the love which had been shaken by so many vicissitudes, but had never yet found its fulfilment, regained its sway over him.

Then they ascended the dunes together, to seek the nearest village and return to daily life.

DR.
MABUS

NORBERT
JACQUES

833.91
J19dEc

DR. MABUSE

NORBERT JACQUES